

THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

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Introduction

Before this present wicked world comes to an end, Jesus predicted that the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed into all the world for a witness:

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Many Christians today believe, and rightly so, that this world of ours cannot last much longer, not the way it is heading. However, for the above prophecy to become a reality, the issue over the unresolved issue of Christology — the true humanity of Christ — must be restored. It is this writer's sincere prayer that the material presented in this study will contribute towards that end.

Ever since the birth of the Christian church — and even long before that — Satan has been at work to pervert the truth as it is in Christ and, thus, nullify the power of the gospel. Beginning with the Galatian Church (in the New Testament times) to our present day, he has infiltrated every denomination and, in one way or another, distorted the gospel message by mixing it with human wisdom or philosophy. As a result, the world has failed to see the power of the gospel manifested in the life of Christ's body, the Church.

The humanity of Christ constitutes a vital part of the gospel message, since it is in that humanity that mankind was redeemed from sin. The truth of justification by faith, restored by the Reformation, goes beyond a legal or forensic redemption. In Christ's holy history, mankind was totally saved from sin, not just its guilt and punishment. Thus, in Christ's earthly mission, justification, sanctification, as well as glorification, were fully accomplished for fallen humanity.

1 Corinthians 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Therefore, all Christian experience is based on a finished work — the objective facts of the gospel — and all three form part of the good news of salvation, to be received by faith alone.

Since, in Christ's doing and dying, the law or principle of sin (love of self) was both conquered and condemned in our sinful human nature that He assumed, this gives to all justified believers everlasting hope — to live as Christ did in overcoming temptation and the self principle of the flesh as He did.

Romans 13:14

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Revelation 3:21

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

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

In view of the fact that all human attempts to solve the moral degeneracy of our present selfish and wicked world have failed miserably, the reproduction of Christ's character of unconditional, selfless love in the lives of Christians becomes an important evidence of the gospel's power to save man from sin. This

demonstration is desperately needed to be witnessed to our present wicked, skeptical, world before the end can come.

John 13:34-35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

It is for this reason that the truth of righteousness by faith is identified with the three angels’ message of Revelation 14, a message whose ultimate goal is to ripen the harvest and produce a people having the faith of Jesus, the patience of the saints, and demonstrating this by their selfless love for their fellow men, the true keeping of the commandments of God.

Revelation 14:15

Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

Revelation 14:12

This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.

Romans 13:8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 5:13-14

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

This is not the teaching of the popular evangelical gospel, which only satisfies man’s egocentric concern to qualify for heaven.

At the Fall, not only did all mankind come under the condemnation of death in Adam, but man’s very nature was corrupted, sold into slavery to sin.

Romans 5:12,18

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all

sinned.... Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

2 Peter 2:19

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity — for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

John 8:34

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Romans 3:9-12

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

Consequently, since the Fall, holy and sinless living, apart from God’s grace, became impossible and, therefore, “by the works of the law no one will be justified” [Galatians 2:16, below].

Romans 7:14-25

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 3:20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Galatians 2:16

...Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

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

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Romans 8:2-4

...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Hence, the good news of the true and full gospel not only offers sinful man legal or forensic “justification unto life” in Christ, but also total sanctification or holiness of living in this present evil world, culminating in glorification at the second advent.

Romans 6:22

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

1 John 3:8-11

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

This is the full or complete gospel to be proclaimed to all nations as a witness before Christ returns to execute judgment.

Chapter 1

The Gospel Defined

Since the foundation of every saving truth is Christ Our Righteousness, all truth pertaining to our redemption must be studied within the context of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

This includes the subject under discussion, the humanity of Christ. Unfortunately, there is today much confusion as to what constitutes the gospel. This problem must, therefore, first be corrected before we can enter the discussion of the human nature Christ assumed at the incarnation.

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

1 Corinthians 1:17-18

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Many have given the word “gospel” a very general meaning. As a result, there is much confusion on this subject. The Bible describes three phases of salvation that are related yet distinct. These three phases of salvation are:

The gospel; The fruits of the gospel; and The hope of the gospel.

Failure to see the relationship and distinction between them has produced the confusion in our midst. The following is a brief description of these three phases of salvation, showing their relationship as well as their distinction.

The Gospel

This is the unconditional good news of salvation obtained for all humanity in Christ's holy history. It is referred to as the objective facts of salvation and is a finished or completed work, to which mankind has made no contribution whatsoever.

Romans 3:28

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

It is, therefore, entirely the work of God and, hence, described by the apostle Paul as the righteousness of God.

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Romans 3:21

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

It is this holy history of Christ — His birth, life, death, and resurrection — that saves sinful man — now, and in the judgment. When received by faith, the gospel becomes justification or righteousness by faith.

It is important to note at this point what Christ actually accomplished in this gospel, for every subjective experience in the believer's life is based on the finished work of Christ. The Bible clearly teaches that God sent His Son into this world to save mankind from sin.

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 3:17

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

But sin is a threefold problem. Most Christians are aware that sin is the transgression of the law that results in guilt and punishment. But

the Scriptures also defines sin as a force, a law or principle that resides in our sinful nature.

Romans 7:17,20,23

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.... Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ...But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Finally, the corruption and physical infirmities of our being are also part and parcel of our sin problem from which we need to be redeemed.

1 Corinthians 15:53-57

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ, by His life, death, and resurrection saved fallen humanity from all of these three problems, so that the true gospel offers mankind salvation full and complete.

Ephesians 2:5-6

...Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus....

Consequently, those who respond to the gospel message in faith stand perfect in Christ, in performance, in justice, as well as in nature. This is what justifies and qualifies them for heaven.

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

The Fruits of the Gospel

This subjective experience is what the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the believer who has accepted the gospel by faith and is walking in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16,22,23

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

In saving us from sin, Christ not only saved us from death to life, but also from sinful living to a life of good works.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 3:8

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

John 14:12

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Hence, the gospel is not only the means of our salvation into heaven but is also the basis of holy living and good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

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

Through the gospel, the believer stands perfect in Christ; this is the basis of assurance. But the good works prove that the believer's faith is genuine and not a sham.

James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

True justification by faith must express itself in behavior, and behavior must embody salvation. Genuine justification by faith, therefore, always produces good works; even though these works may not be apparent to the believer.

Matthew 13:23

But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Matthew 25:37-39

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’”

It is for this reason the New Testament teaches that we are justified by faith alone...

Romans 3:28

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Galatians 2:16

...Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified...

Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

...but judged by works...

Matthew 7:21

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 25:34-40

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

John 5:28-30

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

Romans 2:5-8

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

...the works being not the means, but the evidence of justification by faith.

James 2:20-22

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

Further, as mentioned above, justification is entirely God's doing and a finished or completed work, while sanctification does involve

our human co-operation, walking in the Spirit, and, as already indicated, is an on going process, “the work of a lifetime.”

The Hope of the Gospel

This refers to the ultimate reality of salvation, which will be experienced by all believers at the second coming of Christ. It is at this time that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

1 Corinthians 15:53

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

The Bible calls this experience glorification. The experience of conversion and the process of sanctification does bring about a change to the Christian’s character, but not one iota of change to the believer’s nature. This remains sinful throughout the Christian’s earthly existence or until the second advent.

It is for this reason Christians groan, waiting patiently for the redemption of their bodies.

Romans 8:22-24

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we

ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Like sanctification, glorification must not be equated with the gospel but with the hope of the gospel. For while the gospel is the good news of salvation for all people, the second advent is not. It is the blessed hope only for the believers who are rejoicing in the gospel; but to the unbelievers it is the great day of His wrath.

Revelation 6:12-17

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called

to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”

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

Chapter 2

Views of Modern Scholarship

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

Likewise, many so-called reliable scholars of today still cling to the heresies that are not supported by Scripture. Again, modern scholarship is often influenced by speculation and liberalism, based on human rationale or the opinions of scientists, rather than a “thus saith the Lord.”

However, this does not mean that we must totally discard modern scholarship. Present-day Biblical research has done much to give us a clearer and deeper understanding of Scripture, and we must take advantage of it. This is especially true in regard to the humanity of Christ, for as D.M. Baillie declared:

“It may safely be said that practically all schools of theological thought today take the humanity of our Lord more seriously than has ever been done before by Christian theologians.”

Ever since the incarnation of Christ, man has been confronted with the question Jesus posed to His disciples:

Matthew 16:13

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

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

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

It required two church councils, Nicea (325 A.D.) and Chalcedon (451 A.D.,) for the Christian church to finally restore and accept the apostolic declarations concerning the unipersonality of Christ — that He was fully God and fully man at the same time. This position, even though it did not solve all the Christological problems, was generally held until “the age of enlightenment” (18th century), when scholars and theologians again began to question the person and work of Christ. Today the discussion still goes on.

But while it is true that modern scholars are not all agreed on this issue of the humanity of Christ, it is assuring to know that many reliable present-day Biblical, as well as systematic, theologians — such as Anders Nygren, Karl Barth, J.A.T. Robinson, T.F. Torrance, C.E.B. Cranfield, Nels F.S. Ferre, Harold Roberts, Lesslie Newbigin, and others — without exception, base their arguments on the New Testament teachings.

For example, Anders Nygren, the famous Professor of Systematic Theology at Lund University, Sweden, said this in his Commentary on Romans:

“For it was to be right in sin’s own realm that the Son was to bring sin to judgment, overcome it and take away its power.... Paul is concerned to affirm that when Christ came into the world, He actually stood under the same conditions as we, and under the same destroying powers as had man in bondage.... Christ’s carnal nature was no unreality, but simple, tangible fact. He shared all our conditions. He was under the same powers of destruction. Out of ‘the flesh’ arose for Him the same temptations as for us. But in all this He was master of sin.... Christ overcame sin in its own realm, in the flesh, when He Himself came in the form of sinful flesh.”
[Commentary on Romans 8:1-11.]

Another modern theologian, Harry Johnson, earned his doctoral degree from London University on this very subject. In the

Introduction to his *The Humanity of the Saviour*, (Epworth Press, London, 1962; recently reprinted) he said:

“The eternal Son of God assumed human nature; on this all Christians agree. But what kind of human nature did He assume? Was it the human nature that was affected by the Fall, ‘fallen human nature’, or was it human nature as originally created by God? ...The answer of this book is that He took human nature as it was because of the Fall. Despite this, He lived a perfect, sinless life, and finally redeemed this ‘fallen nature’ through His Cross; in this victory is the basis of Atonement.” [Flyleaf.]

Johnson adds:

“This Christological position is supported by the New Testament, and there are several indications which suggest that it gives a deeper interpretation to some sections of the gospel narrative. It is clearly taught by Paul, and is the obvious implication of certain aspects of the Christology of Hebrews.” [Ibid.]

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

“Perhaps the most fundamental truth which we have to learn in the Christian Church, or rather relearn since we have suppressed it, is

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

Could it be that it is for this reason The International Critical Commentary has, since 1982, changed its position on the humanity of Christ from the pre-Fall position to the post-Fall? This is what it has to say, as a result of this change:

“But if we recognize that Paul believed it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the unintermittent warfare of His whole earthly life by which He forced our rebellious nature to render a perfect obedience to God.”

It then goes on to make this observation:

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

After 15 years of exhaustive research, the Word Biblical Commentary has come up with what is believed to be the latest and most thorough interpretations of the Scripture ever written. Note what this commentary has to say about Christ being sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3).

“Here, however, the fundamental thought is added that God achieved his purpose for man not by scrapping the first effort and starting again, but by working through man in his fallenness, letting sin and death exhaust themselves in this man’s flesh, and remaking him beyond death as a progenitor and enabler of a life according to the Spirit. Hence whatever the precise force of the likeness, it must

include the thought of Jesus' complete identification with 'sinful flesh.' [cf. NJB: 'the same human nature as any sinner.']

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

Chapter 3

The Significance of Christ's Humanity to Us

At the heart of the Christian faith is the affirmation that Christ, the Son of God, became man in order to be the Saviour of the world. According to one spiritual giant, “the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain which binds our souls to Christ and through Christ to God.” That is why, as Christians, this should be our study.

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

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

To prove that the law of God can be kept by man.

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

To be our example.

While the Bible does point to Christ as our example, it does so only with reference to believers who have accepted Christ by faith and have experienced the new birth.

1 Peter 2:21

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

But Scripture does not teach that this is the primary reason why Christ took on our human flesh. Those who emphasize Christ as our example, without first clearly presenting Him as our Saviour, give the impression that they are teaching the example theory of the atonement, which is why they are often accused of the heresy of perfectionism or legalism.

To redeem mankind from sin.

Scripture presents this as the primary reason for the Son of God being made flesh.

Matthew 1:21

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Hebrews 2:14-17

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who

all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

At the very heart of the doctrine of Christology is the glorious truth that Christ assumed humanity so that He could be the Saviour of the world. And only to those who have first received Him as their Saviour does He become to them an Example.

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

Those who hold to the vicarious position (one person acting in place of another), as the Reformers and many Evangelicals today, teach the pre-Fall nature of Christ. Here is their basic argument.

Sin is a dual problem. It is first of all a condition or a state, since, to them, a sinful nature is sin that automatically stands condemned. Accordingly, Christ had to take a sinless human nature in order to vicariously substitute our sinful nature which stands condemned. They insist that, if Christ had taken our sinful nature as we know it, He would automatically have been a sinner Himself in need of a

Saviour. Secondly, His perfect life and sacrificial death substituted for our sinful performance. Thus, by His sinless human nature, which vicariously substitutes for our sinful nature and by His perfect performance (i.e., doing and dying), which vicariously substituted our sinful performance, Christ redeemed mankind from sin.

But this position presents a twofold problem.

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

Today the problem of "legal fiction" has become a real issue for some scholars, so that they are turning to a modified form of "the moral influence theory" to answer the question, why Christ had to die. Incidentally, the "moral influence theory" is not heretical in what it teaches (Christ died to demonstrate His love for us) but in what it denies (that Christ's death was legally essential for our justification).

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

their Creator, this makes it ethical,” are unacceptable. Not even God’s law will allow sin to be transferred from the guilty to the innocent.

Deuteronomy 24:16

Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

Ezekiel 18:1-20

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The parents eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child — both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.

“Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor’s wife or have sexual relations with a woman during her period. He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He does not lend to them at interest or take a profit from them. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two

parties. He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord.

“Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things (though the father has done none of them): He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbor’s wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. He lends at interest and takes a profit. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.

“But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things: He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor’s wife. He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He withholds his hand from mistreating the poor and takes no interest or profit from them. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father’s sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people.

“Yet you ask, ‘Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?’ Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will

the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.”

Only when the two (the humanity of Christ and our corporate humanity) are linked together, as it was illustrated in the sanctuary service, does the substitution theory of the atonement become legally accepted.

1 Corinthians 10:18

Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar?

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

Galatians 2:19-20

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

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

Consequently, by His doing and dying, Christ actually changed mankind's history so that all humanity was legally justified at the cross. Justification by faith is making effective that legal justification in the life of the believer. Faith, therefore, is more than a mental assent to the truth. It is a heart appreciation of the cross of Christ which, in turn, produces obedience or surrender of the will to the truth as it is in Christ.

Romans 1:5; 6:17; 10:16

Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. ...But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ...But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Galatians 5:7

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8

...And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Such obedience of faith is the basis of true holy living.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 6:10-13

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

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

Romans 7:17,20,23

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ...Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ...but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

...and, therefore, we are “by nature children of wrath.”

Ephesians 2:3

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Since the Bible clearly teaches that Christ assumed the same flesh as that of the human race He came to redeem,...

Hebrews 2:14-17

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

...the correct solution to the above problem is to take note of the qualifying word used by the New Testament writers when they refer to the humanity of Christ — for example:

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Galatians 4:4

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law....

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In these three texts, the word “became/born/made” is used with reference to the human nature of Christ.

What does this word mean? When Christ became a man, He actually became what He was not, so that the sinful nature He assumed was not His by native right but something He took upon Himself, or assumed, or was made to be. He did this in order to redeem that nature of sin. The words “took part” found in Hebrews 2:14 and the word “likeness” in Romans 8:3 carry the same connotation as the word “made” (see the International Critical Commentary, 1982 ed., and Word Biblical Commentary on Romans 8:3).

Hebrews 2:14

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil....

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

Had Christ consented to the sinful desires of that nature which He assumed, even by a thought, then He would have become a sinner Himself in need of a Saviour. That is why it must be stressed that, in dealing with the human nature of Christ, we must be exceedingly careful not to drag His mind or His will into sin, or say that He had a sinful nature.

But the fact is that Christ did actually assume our condemned sinful nature that “is enmity against God” and “not subject to the law of God”...

Romans 8:7

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.

...but, in His case, He totally defeated “the law of sin and death” that resided in that sinful human nature, which He assumed, and then executed that condemned nature on the cross. This is the main thought expressed in Romans 8:1-3 which is Paul’s explanation of Romans 7:24-25.

Romans 7:24-25

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 8:1-3

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

By assuming our corporate sinful humanity at the incarnation, Christ qualified to be the second Adam, the second head and representative of mankind (the word "Adam" in Hebrew means "mankind"). Thus, in His doing and dying as man's Substitute, He wrought out a redemption for all humanity.

1 Corinthians 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Ephesians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This is the good news of the gospel.

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

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

Chapter 4

Christ Our Redeemer

The fundamental truth of the New Testament is that:

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

In Romans 5:12-21, this is fully expounded by the apostle Paul, so that some Biblical scholars consider this passage not only as the high point of the letter to the Romans (according to Luther, “the clearest gospel of all”), but the most significant passage in all the Bible.

Romans 5:12-21

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the

gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

According to the argument of this passage, it is by the offense or sin of one (Adam) that judgment came upon all men; by the righteousness of one (Christ), the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life (vs. 18). Adam, says Paul, is a type of Christ (vs. 14, last part). In order, therefore, to understand fully and appreciate what God has accomplished for fallen mankind in Christ, we must first come to grips with our situation in Adam.

In carefully examining this passage (Romans 5:12-21,) you will notice that the reason why Adam's one sin condemns all mankind to death is because in Adam "all have sinned" (vs. 12). Adam's sin, in other words, was a corporate sin, it implicated all mankind. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. The life God breathed into Adam at creation was the corporate life of all mankind, and this is why the word "life" in the Hebrew text of Genesis 2:7 is in the plural.

Genesis 2:7

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

God "breathed into his (Adam's) nostrils the breath of lives" (emphasis mine). Hence, as Acts 17:26 indicates, the human race is actually the multiplication of Adam's life.

Acts 17:26

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

However, before Adam began to multiply that corporate life, he sinned. Therefore, all sinned in him, and every child born since then receives a life that has already sinned in Adam, a life already condemned to death. This is why Paul declares:

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

“In Adam, all die.” And in view of this, Ellen White writes:

“All men receive from him [Adam] nothing but guilt [i.e., condemnation] and the sentence of death.” (6 BC 1074)

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

This fundamental truth is vital to an understanding of the gospel, for Paul, having proved our situation in Adam in Romans 5:13-14, goes on to state that Adam was “the figure (or pattern) of Him Who was to come” (i.e., Christ).

Romans 5:13-14

To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

By this he did not mean that Christ would come in Adam's sinless human nature, but rather He would come as man's representative, as was Adam.

In other words, just as all mankind sinned in Adam and, therefore, stand condemned in him, likewise, all mankind obeyed in Christ and, therefore, stand legally justified unto life in Him. For this reason, Paul can affirm in 1 Corinthians 15:22 that "even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

This is the in Christ motif, the central theme of Paul's theology and the biblical solution to the ethical problem of why Christ had to die.

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

1 Corinthians 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

In answer to the question “How Is Substitution Possible?” Dr. Richard Davidson, of Andrews University Seminary, gave this as one of the solutions to the ethical problem of the atonement:

“Christ is the representative man, the second Adam. Just as Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek because, by corporate solidarity, he was in the loins of Abraham [Hebrews 7:9], so the whole world was corporately in Christ on the Cross.

Hebrews 7:9

One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,....

As Paul put it:

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

We all died in Christ on Golgotha. Thus, the guilt of the whole world was atoned for by the death of that one Representative Man.”

(Davidson: “Salvation and Forgiveness,” ATS Journal, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1992.)

Because many object to the doctrine of Original Sin (perhaps a better term could be “Corporate Sin” rather than “Original Sin”), the tendency has been to dilute our situation in Adam as taught by Paul in Romans 5:12-21 and other passages. Any interpretation however, that waters down the condemnation and death mankind inherits in Adam will of necessity require undermining the “justification of life” accomplished in Christ for all mankind, since in Romans 5:12-21 what is true of Adam is true of Christ, but in a directly opposite sense.

As the British scholar Harry Johnson puts it:

“If Paul does not mean that all men are somehow implicated in the sin of Adam, he destroys the whole force of the parallel of the redemption in Christ.” (The Humanity of the Saviour, p. 10.)

It is only when “Original Sin” is linked with “Original Guilt,” as some Calvinists and the Roman Catholic Church teach, that this doctrine tends to more darkness than light. To put it in Johnson’s words:

“Even though the phrase ‘Original Sin’ points to a valid truth, the phrase ‘Original Guilt’ seems unacceptable and out of harmony with the biblical message” (ibid., p. 24.)

Another British scholar, James D.G. Dunn, makes a similar statement in the Word Biblical Commentary:

“Paul could be said to hold a doctrine of original sin, in the sense that, from the beginning, everyone has been under the power of sin with death as the consequence, but not a doctrine of original guilt, since individuals are only held responsible for deliberate acts of defiance against God and his law.” (Vol. 38a, p. 291).

Guilt involves volition and responsibility and God does not hold us responsible for Adam’s sin, any more than we are responsible for Christ’s righteousness. Nevertheless, both Adam and Christ stood as the heads and representatives of the human race and what they did affected all mankind. That is why Scripture declares all men stand “condemned to death” because of Adam’s disobedience and are “by nature the children of wrath,” and all men are “justified to life” because of Christ’s obedience.

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Ephesians 2:3

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

To reject the judgment of condemnation and death in Adam is to reject our justification unto life in Christ, and this, unfortunately, is what has led many into legalism. For as the Swedish theologian Anders Nygren states in his Commentary on Romans (5:12):

“But if Paul had meant that all become subject to death because of the sins which they themselves committed, the conclusion would logically be that all would enter into life by reason of the righteousness which they themselves achieved. That is an idea which is certainly the utter opposite of all that Paul says.”

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned....

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

Romans 5:17

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

“Receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness” (emphasis mine). This writer feels strongly that a correct understanding of Original Sin (or Corporate Sin) is crucial to a correct understanding of Original Righteousness, which is in Christ. Note the following statements from Scripture.

Ephesians 1:3 [GNB]

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! For in our union with Christ He has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world.

(Emphasis mine.) And again:

1 Corinthians 1:30 [GNB]

But God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By Him we are put right with God; we became God's holy people and are set free.

(Again, emphasis mine.) This is what is meant by Original Righteousness.

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

Let me put it this way: Did sinful humanity die the wages of sin on the cross, or sinless humanity? If we admit that it was sinful humanity, then not only were the just and legal demands of the law met at the cross, but fallen men can honestly identify themselves, through faith, with the death which sets them free from the curse of the law.

Romans 6:7

...Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

(The word "freed" in this text in the Greek is "justified.") This, in fact, was Paul's point.

Galatians 2:19-20

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

On the other hand, if we say that it was a sinless human nature that died on the cross, instead of our corporate condemned nature, we accuse God of injustice, since His own Word will not legally accept the death of an innocent person in the place of the guilty one.

Deuteronomy 24:16

Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

Ezekiel 18:20

The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

Besides, such a belief makes it impossible for fallen man, truly and sincerely to identify himself with that death as true faith demands.

2 Timothy 2:11

Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him....

Romans 6:3,8

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ...Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

The reason why the Reformationist gospel came under fire and was been accused of “legal fiction,” “divine make-believe,” “celestial bookkeeping,” and “as-if-passed-on righteousness,” by Roman Catholic scholars in the council of Trent, is for this very reason. By teaching that Christ assumed a sinless human nature at the incarnation, the Saviour has been alienated from the humanity He came to redeem, and, consequently, this makes the gospel unethical or “legal fiction.”

At the expense of repetition, may I emphasize: no innocent person can lawfully pay the wages of sin for a guilty person. Those who insist that Christ assumed the sinless nature of Adam have tried in vain to defend the ethical issue of the gospel. No wonder so many are turning to “the moral influence theory” as a better solution to the meaning of the cross.

The gift of God to fallen mankind is the divine eternal life of His Son.

1 John 5:11

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

This was necessary because the human life of Christ, which was in reality our corporate condemned life, died the second or eternal death, “the wages of sin,” on the cross. It is this gift that made it possible for our humanity, united to Christ, to be resurrected to life the third day, and, thus, give eternal hope to us.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Many Evangelical scholars have failed to see the true significance of the supreme sacrifice of the cross, because they hold to the non-Biblical view that man possesses an immortal soul.

The clear teaching of the New Testament is that, on the cross, sinful humanity died in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Colossians 2:20; 3:3

Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules.... For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

1 Peter 2:24

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

This fulfilled or met the just demands of the law.

Romans 6:7; 7:1,4,6

...Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. ...Do you not know, brothers and sisters — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? ...So, my brothers and sisters, you also

died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ...But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

As a result, it gave God the legal or lawful right to forgive us of our sins.

Matthew 26:27-28

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Romans 3:24-26

...And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood — to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

In exchange for our condemned life that died eternally on the cross, God gave us the immortal life of His Son, so that we may live again.

1 John 5:11-12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

2 Timothy 1:8-10

So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

This is God's love gift to humanity and the glorious truth of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone [the old life with its condemnation], the new is here!

This truth becomes relevant only when we identify Christ's humanity with our corporate sinful humanity that needed redeeming.

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

“In Christ we become linked with the second Adam and His victory and His benefits become ours.... It could appear, therefore, that, for this Representative theory of the cross to be fully adequate to meet the sinful human situation, there needs to be incorporated within its structure a Christological position similar to the one that is the object of our present study (i.e., Christ assumed our fallen nature at the Incarnation).” (p 212).

Brooke Foss Westcott, the 19th century New Testament Greek scholar, expressed a similar truth:

“If Christ took our nature upon Him, as we believe, by an act of love, it was not that of one but of all. He was not one man only among many men, but in Him all humanity was gathered up. And thus now, as at all time, mankind are, so to speak, organically united with Him. His acts are in a true sense our acts, so far as we realize the union, His death is our death, His resurrection our resurrection.” (*The Gospel of the Resurrection*, Chap. 2, p. 39).

Christ assumed human nature as we know it after the Fall. Also, in spite of this, Jesus lived a perfect life through the power of the indwelling Spirit, triumphing over the “law of sin” in the flesh. Finally, this nature was cleansed on the cross and Jesus rose from the dead with a redeemed or glorified human nature. This nature is now reserved for the believer in heaven until the second coming.

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

This is how God legally justified all mankind, in the doing and dying of Christ, and liberated us totally from our sin problem to give us eternal hope now and in the world to come.

This being so, the good news of the gospel not only guarantees legal justification [to all who believe] but also offers total victory over the clamors of our sinful nature. Righteousness by faith, therefore, includes, on the one hand, peace with God through justification by faith, but, at the same time, gives hope to the justified believer to live a life above sinning.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

Romans 13:14

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

This is the true understanding of righteousness by faith in Christ.

This now brings us to the secondary purpose of the Incarnation [in the next study].

Chapter 5

Christ, The Believer's Example

One of the big questions under discussion presently is this: “Is sinless living in sinful flesh possible?” Sinless living in sinful flesh is not only possible, but must be the goal of every believer.

In Romans 7:14-24, Paul demonstrates that the stumbling block to sinless living in the experience of the believer is the “law of sin” dwelling in the flesh of fallen sinful nature.

Romans 7:14-24

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a

prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

According to Scripture, Adam's sin not only brought condemnation to all mankind, but also corrupted human nature, bringing all humanity under the law of sin.

Romans 5:19

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

John 8:32-34

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

They answered him, “We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

Romans 3:9; 7:14

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles

alike are all under the power of sin. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

If Christ did not have to contend with this “law of sin” in His flesh, then we must conclude that He did not totally redeem mankind from sin. As a result, He cannot be set forth as the Saviour from our state of sin and, therefore, as an example to believers.

Consequently, sinless living in sinful flesh becomes an impossibility this side of eternity. Yet Scripture declares that we may overcome even as Christ overcame.

Revelation 3:21

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Romans 6:12

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Again, Peter affirms that those who arm themselves with the mind of Christ will cease from sin.

1 Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

And, Paul told the Galatian Christians that, if they walked in the Spirit, they would not fulfill the sinful desires of their sinful natures.

Galatians 5:16

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 13:14

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

All this becomes meaningful because, in Christ's holy history, humanity has been set free from "the law of sin and death."

Romans 8:2

...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Having assumed our sinful humanity, with all the force of sin dwelling in its nature, Christ conquered and condemned "the law of sin" through "the law of the Spirit of life," and, thus, became forever

the Redeemer of the world as well as the perfect Example for the believers.

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

Galatians 5:4

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

In the New Testament, sanctification, as well as glorification, is making real in experience what is already true of the believer in Christ who is justified by faith. Man’s only hope now and in the judgment is through justification by faith in the doing and dying of Christ. But justification or imputed righteousness, wonderful as it may be, is not the end of God’s saving plan. Whom He justifies He also sanctifies as the fruit and evidence of justification by faith, and glorifies as the ultimate reality of that justification.

Romans 8:28-30

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

And when this, along with the cleansing of the earth, is realized, everlasting righteousness will be fully ushered in as a tangible reality and Christ will have finished His heavenly sanctuary ministry. He will have accomplished all that He fulfilled for our humanity, which He assumed and redeemed two thousand years ago.

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

“Such is the divine secret of Christian sanctification,” says Evan H. Hopkins, “which distinguishes it profoundly from simple natural

morality. The latter says to man, Become what thou wouldest be. The former says to the believer, Become what thou art already in Christ. It puts a positive fact at the foundation of moral effort, to which the believer can return and have recourse anew at every instant. And this is the reason why his labor is not lost in barren aspiration, and does not end in despair.” (The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life, p 15).

When Christian ethics is defined in terms of the believer’s good works, even though they may be motivated by our human love for Christ, this ceases to prove effective justification which is by faith, but only shows man’s ability to produce self-righteousness, which is “filthy rags” (because it is polluted with self).

Isaiah 64:6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

What the world desperately needs to see is not man’s goodness, but Christ manifested in His “body,” the church. The church is to be the light of the world.

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.

Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The word “light” in this text is in the singular, and refers to Christ and His righteousness.

John 1:4

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

Then there will be no excuse for sin to continue and God will bring an end to it. This is the true meaning of what is included in the cleansing of the sanctuary.

Again, sinless living must not be confused with sinlessness, or absolute perfection, which was the heresy of the Holy Flesh movement that once plagued the church. Sinlessness of nature will not be a reality until the second coming, when:

1 Corinthians 15:54

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Sinless living has to do with reproducing Christ’s character, or holy living, in sinful flesh. This process brings no change to the

believer's hereditary nature, which remains inherently sinful until death or the coming of Christ. It is for this reason, there will never come a time, this side of eternity, when we can live without the Saviour.

Since sinless living in the life of the believer is the work of God produced in sinful flesh, this is referred to in Scripture as "the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh."

1 Timothy 3:16

Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

This was realized in Christ's humanity, and through faith in Him becomes the hope and goal of the justified believer — "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Colossians 1:27

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1 John 2:15-16

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world.

1 John 5:4

...For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

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

Romans 7:14-24

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I

want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

This cry is immediately followed by the shout of triumph in verse 25a:

Romans 7:25a

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Then the apostle goes on to show that in Christ's humanity which was like our sinful humanity, "the law of sin and death" was totally conquered and condemned.

Romans 8:2-3

...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

It is important to note that our being set free from the “law of sin and death” is expressed in the past historical tense (Greek, Aorist) in verse 2. That is, this “law of sin and death,” which in Romans 7 was the stumbling block to holy living, has in reality already been dealt with in Christ’s humanity by “the law of the Spirit of life,” and, therefore:

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

...as well as there is hope for the righteous requirements of the law to be fulfilled in the believer who walks in the Spirit as Christ did.

Romans 8:4

...In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 13:14

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

We must, however, realize at this point that when the New Testament speaks of holy living, it does so on two levels: mental, as well as practical. Christ lived a sinless life on both levels in His humanity, and, thus, demonstrated that when fallen man totally surrenders his will to God as did Christ, he is able through God's power to overcome sin.

John 6:57; 8:28; 14:10

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

However, sinless living in sinful flesh is only possible when we have "the mind of Christ." We are often concerned only about holy living on the practical level; but this is possible only when we have put sin away in the mind (through repentance — a turning around of the mind), through a faith obedience to the principle of the cross.

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Romans 6:17-18

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

According to Scripture, every born-again follower of Christ who has truly understood and believed the gospel will reject temptation in his innermost soul (converted mind) from the moment of conversion. This is because New Testament faith is more than a mental assent to the gospel, but also includes a heart obedience to the truth as it is in Christ.

Romans 1:5; 6:17; 10:16

Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake.

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”

Galatians 5:7

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8

...And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 5:9

...and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...

This is Paul’s whole argument in Romans 6. In the first half of this chapter, Paul endeavors to show that every believer baptized into Christ must consider himself “dead unto sin,” and “alive unto God.”

Romans 6:11

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Professor Godat comments:

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

In the second half of Romans 6, Paul continues the same argument, that sinning must be unthinkable in the mind of the converted believer, but from another standpoint; that is, the believer has been set free from sin in Christ, and by his own heart choice has become a slave of God, the author of righteousness.

Romans 6:17-18

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Based on this dual fact — ”dead to sin” and “slaves of God” — the truly converted person does not cherish even a single sin. Freedom from sin’s ruling power and dominion is the immediate privilege of every one who takes hold of it by faith, since this is part and parcel of the good news the gospel of Christ.

This does not mean that Christians have necessarily begun to live a sinless life on the practical level from the moment of conversion. On the contrary, we will have to come many times to the foot of the cross because of our shortcomings. But we do not become unjustified every time we fall, nor does Jesus forsake us. However, day by day we are to grow in Him and gain victories.

Ephesians 4:17-24

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Further, because our sinful natures, which will not change until the second advent, Christians are never to feel that they have attained perfection.

Philippians 3:12-15

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

On the other hand, even though believers are in constant battle with indwelling sin, they must never condone sinning, since that would be a denial of one's faith obedience to the gospel.

Romans 6:2,15

By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!

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

Philippians 2:5

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus....

Genuine righteousness by faith means that we have fully identified ourselves with the holy history of Christ — His perfect life and His death to sin. When this is realized and believed by God's people, the way is then open for God's Spirit to take over and demonstrate to the world the power of the gospel. At the heart of every failure to live up to God's ideal is unbelief.

True New Testament faith is taking God at His word, even though it disagrees with our human rational, the scientific method, or even

human experience. Abraham believed God against all hope and, therefore, became the father or prototype of all true believers.

Romans 4:16-18

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

What Paul failed to accomplish in Romans 7, through his own strength or self-effort, is made possible by faith in Romans 8 through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Romans 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

In these last days, the Holy Spirit is preparing a faithful and willing people, who by the grace of Christ will mature to the place where they will fully overcome “even as” Christ overcame. When this happens, the earth will be lightened with His glory.

Revelation 18:1

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

In Ephesians 2:8-9, we have a clear gospel statement that we are saved by grace alone through faith and not by our works.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

But going on to verse 10 we discover that, in this salvation, God has created us “anew in Christ Jesus, to do good works” which He now purposes that every believer walk in.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Colossians 2:6

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him....

Titus 2:14

[Jesus Christ], who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

In view of this gospel truth, let us, therefore, remove all unbelief and have "the mind of Christ."

Philippians 2:5-7

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

A mind or purpose that is fully emptied of self, surrendered to the cross of Christ, so that God may take over and enlighten the earth with the glory of His Son.

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

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

Christ is waiting with longing desire to reproduce His character in His church. How long are we going to keep Him waiting?

Psalm 102:16

For the Lord will rebuild Zion [the church] and appear in his glory.

Ephesians 2:19-22; 5:25-27

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Chapter 6

Objections Considered

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

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

While Christ did assume our humanity and was like us physically, the Scripture refers to Him as “that holy thing,” “without sin,” “separate from sinners.”

Luke 1:35

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Hebrews 4:15; 7:26

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every

way, just as we are — yet he did not sin. ...Such a high priest truly meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Therefore, His spiritual nature was like Adam before the Fall.

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

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

Since a correct view of Christ's humanity is essential to a true understanding of salvation — both in terms of justification as well as sanctification and glorification — these objections, which come from sincere men of God, cannot be ignored. Let us, therefore, consider them in the spirit of truth, unity, and the clarity of the gospel, so that the divine purpose of enlightening this dark world with His glory may soon become a living reality.

1. The argument that Christ would have been tainted with sin and could not be the spotless Lamb of God if He took our sinful nature derives from the doctrine of “original sin.” This doctrine, as we saw earlier, teaches that, because of the Fall, sinful human nature stands condemned because of indwelling sin.

Romans 5:18-19; 7:20,23

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ...But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Hence, it is thought, if Christ assumed this sinful nature, He would automatically become a condemned sinner like all men are from their birth.

While it is true that Paul refers to our sinful humanity as “the body of sin...”

Romans 6:6

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

...because it is indwelt by “the law of sin and death...”

Romans 7:18ff

Do you not know, brothers and sisters — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? ...But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

...the problem of original sin cannot be applied to Christ. This is because of the dual nature or unipersonality of our Saviour. At the Incarnation, Christ's divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity that needed redeeming, so that Christ was both God and man at the same time. However, it is most important that we keep these two natures distinct, a distinction the 16th century Reformers, unfortunately, failed to preserve.

In the Incarnation, Christ took upon His own sinless divine nature our sinful human nature. For this reason, wherever the Bible refers to Christ's humanity, it uses the word "made." He was "made flesh..."

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

...“made to be sin...”

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

...“made of a woman...”

Galatians 4:4

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law....

...“made a curse...”

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”

...and “made of the seed of David.”

Romans 1:3

...regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David....

The word “made,” as we saw earlier, means that Christ became what He was not by nature.

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

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

James 1:14

...But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

For this reason, Paul is very careful to use the word “likeness” when he says that God sent His Son in “sinful flesh” to condemn \“sin in the flesh.”

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

While Scripture, on the one hand, identifies Christ with our total sinful situation, apart from actually sinning, in order that He might truly redeem us...

Hebrews 2:14-18

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

...on the other hand, it makes very clear that He was not altogether like us, a sinner; “this can never be.”

According to The International Critical Commentary (Romans, Vol. 1; 1982 edition), Paul used the word “likeness” in Romans 8:3 to emphasize the fact that “the Son of God was not, in being sent by His Father, changed into a man, but rather assumed human nature while still remaining Himself.”

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

In view of this, the commentary concludes “Paul’s thought to be that the Son of God assumed the selfsame fallen human nature that is ours, but that in His case that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him — He never ceased to be the eternal Son of God.”

We may explain it this way: Every born-again Christian has become a “partaker of the divine nature” through the experience of the new birth.

2 Peter 1:4

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

While this divine nature is sinless, this in no way makes the believer himself innately sinless, even though Scripture declares such a person a child of God.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

1 John 3:1-2

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

This is because this divine nature does not belong to the believer by native right. Likewise, partaking of our sinful nature did not make Christ a sinner, since that human nature was not His by native right. He assumed it in order to redeem it. And this He accomplished in His doing and dying. Therefore, as long as Christ Himself did not

consent to sin, or yield in any way to temptation, He remained spotless.

Again, those who insist that by taking our sinful nature Christ would disqualify Himself from being the spotless Lamb of God have failed to see the true significance of the sanctuary symbolism with reference to Christ's redeeming work. Because of the Fall, all humanity stands condemned and under the curse of the law.

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Galatians 3:10

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

For the fallen race to be redeemed from this condemnation and curse, plus to have their status changed to justification unto life, two requirements are demanded of God's law: (a) The law requires perfect obedience in order to qualify for life. This was accomplished by Christ's 33 years of active obedience to God's law in our humanity which He assumed. However, this obedience, even though it was absolutely perfect, or spotless, could not cleanse our humanity

from the curse and condemnation of the law. Only death could set us legally free from sin.

Romans 6:7

...Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

And until Christ took this condemned humanity to the cross and surrendered it to the full wages of sin, He could not qualify to be our righteousness.

Romans 4:25

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

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

Hebrews 9:12

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

John 5:24

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

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

What that spotless lamb represented had to do with our salvation, and that is the perfect obedience of Christ which the law demands of us in order to qualify us for life. When the spotless lamb was slain, it represented the blood or death of Christ which cleanses us from sin.

Hebrews 9:22-28

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. Nor

did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Both requirements were necessary for man's justification. This is obviously what the writer of Hebrews had in mind.

Hebrews 10:5-10, 14

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am — it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, my God.'" First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" — though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ...For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

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

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

Again, there are those who say that if Christ assumed our sinful nature as we know it, His perfect obedience would have been polluted because of the corrupt channel through which it was performed. This again cannot be substantiated by Scripture.

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

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

James defines our temptations in this way:

James 1:14

...But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

But while we have yielded to temptation, never for a moment did Christ consent to temptation, so that not even by a thought did sin rest in His mind. According to the Greek New Testament scholar K. West, “The words ‘without sin’ [Hebrews 4:15, just above] mean that, in our Lord’s case, temptation never resulted in sin” (Hebrews in the Greek New Testament, p. 95).

Thus, Christ produced a perfectly sinless character in our corporate sinful nature that He assumed. In doing so, He fully satisfied the positive requirements of the law as our substitute. This qualified Him to be the spotless Lamb of God.

Yet, on the cross, this same Christ, as the Lamb of God, took away the sin of the world.

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

How could Christ take away “the sin” (note the singular) of the world if it was not there in the flesh which He assumed? Or, in other words, how could Christ condemn “sin in the flesh” in a sinless flesh?

Romans 8:3 [again, note the singular]

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

But Christ did take away our sin, by condemning it on the cross. He could do this because He assumed our flesh which has sin dwelling in it.

Romans 7:17, 20

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ...Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

In Hebrews 9:26 we read that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hebrews 9:26:

Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

According to Wuest, the putting away of sin denotes both the sinful nature as well as sinful acts:

“The verb (thetos) means ‘to do away with something laid down, prescribed, established.’ Sin had established itself in the human race through the disobedience of Adam, a sinful nature and sinful acts” (ibid., p. 40, emphasis mine).

Because Christ partook of and overcame our sinful human nature, He is able today, as our High Priest, to do both — understand when we’re tempted, as well as help us when we are.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 2:18

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

The word “infirmities” [used in Hebrews 4:15 in the King James Version of the Bible] must not be limited to physical weakness such as fatigue or aging, as some teach. Again, according to Wuest [if you’re using that translation of the Bible]: “The word ‘infirmities’ is *astheneia*, ‘moral weakness which makes men capable of sinning,’ in other words, the totally depraved nature.” Interpreting the expression “He Himself (Christ) also is compassed with infirmity,” Wuest continues: “The high priest has infirmity, sinful tendencies, lying around him. That is, he is completely encircled by sin since he has a sinful nature which if unrepressed, will control his entire being” (*ibid.*, p. 98).

In this connection it is interesting to note Karl Barth’s observation:

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

Thus we may be assured through this truth that our redemption in Christ's holy history was both perfect and complete. Not only do we believers have in Christ's righteousness "justification unto life," but in Him, we can likewise claim liberation from our bondage to sin, so that we may now "live unto God."

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Romans 6:7-13

...Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

This is the basis of true justification as well as sanctification, both of which are to be received by faith alone.

2. Do the following statements of Scripture propose that Christ's human nature was sinless: "the holy one;" [or "that holy thing" in the KJV]; "without sin;" "separate from sinners"?

Luke 1:35

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 7:26

Such a high priest truly meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

In order to understand these statements correctly, we must take into account other texts which identify Christ with our sinful human condition. There must be no contradiction. God "hath made Him to be sin for us."

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God sent Him “in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

And “in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.”

Hebrews 2:17

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Christ “Himself took our infirmities,” etc.

Matthew 8:17

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

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

1 Corinthians 15:53

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Similarly, “the body of sin” is identified with “the body of this death.”

Romans 6:6

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

Romans 7:24

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

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

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

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

1 Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

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

Romans 7:14

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

With this in mind, let us examine the key texts referring to the sinlessness of Christ and see how they either refer to His sinless divine nature or His sinless life or performance produced in our sinful flesh.

Luke 1:35

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

This phrase is used in connection with Christ being “called the Son of God.” Therefore, it was His divinity the angel was referring to, which was holy and sinless, and which constituted His true being.

John 8:46

Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?

Jesus made this statement when talking to the Jews who were incapable of reading into His divine nature, or appreciating His perfect character. He was referring to His performance, which was without sin.

John 14:30

I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me...

It was ever Satan’s purpose to thwart the plan of salvation by enticing Christ to sin. The temptations in the wilderness are a good example. But all his attempts failed, as Hebrews 4:15 confirms.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

It was to this victory that Christ was referring. Jesus Himself explains this passage in the next verse.

John 14:31

...But he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

This was perfect righteousness!

Hebrews 7:26

Such a high priest truly meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

The phrase “set apart from sinners” is preceded by the words, “holy, blameless, pure,” all of which suggest Christ’s perfect performance, His righteousness. It is in His sinless living and not in the nature which He took that Christ was unlike or separate from the sinful human race He came to redeem.

Hebrews 1:9

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

This character is His righteousness!

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This statement is made in the context of Christ being our sin-bearer. Christ knew no sin with reference to both His divine nature and His character or performance. Yet He “bore our sins in His own body.”

1 Peter 2:24

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

He did this by bearing our sinful humanity from birth all the way to death. In this way, Paul tells us, God “made him who had no sin to be sin for us.”

1 John 3:5

But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins.
And in him is no sin.

Hebrews 9:14

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

This expression of “offering himself unblemished to God,” as well as to “cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death” which follows, both suggest performance rather than nature. He was “without sin,” although tempted as we are.

1 Peter 1:19

...But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Son thou

gh he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him....

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

Hence, G

od's righteousness manifested in sinful flesh can be truly called "the mystery of godliness":

1 Timothy 3:16

Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

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

In Romans 2 and 3, Paul demonstrates that "all are under the power of sin" so that "there is no one righteous, not even one." Therefore, so far as sinful human nature is concerned, "there is no one who does good."

Romans 3:9-12

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

Yet the same apostle also informs us that what sinful man cannot do, in and of himself, and what the law could not do because of weakened human nature, God did!

Romans 7:14-24

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in

me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

He did it in Christ's humanity which was "in the likeness of" our sinful flesh. And he did this so that the righteous demands of the law might be fulfilled in us, who, like Christ, choose to walk in the Spirit.

Romans 8:3-4

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Christ's sinless living did not prove that sinful man in and of himself can resist temptation and live above sin. What His life demonstrated proved that sinful man indwelt and controlled by God's Spirit can overcome all the powers of the devil that he masters through the sinful flesh. This is the teaching of the New Testament. Speaking of

Himself as a man, Christ made it clear that He could do nothing of Himself...

John 5:19,30

Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ...By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

...that He lived “by the Father.”

John 6:57

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

Even His works all proceeded from the Father.

John 14:10-11

Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

Luke, after relating the temptations of Christ in the wilderness, concludes:

Luke 4:14

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

Speaking of His death, the writer of Hebrews says: “By the grace of God” Christ “tasted death for every man”:

Hebrews 2:9

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It is only in this context that Christ could resist all temptations, and thus make it possible for the born-again believer to live above sin.

2 Peter 1:4

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises [i.e., in Christ], so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

While Paul makes it clear that man in and of himself cannot resist temptation, he nonetheless makes it equally clear that what is impossible with man is possible with God:

Galatians 5:16

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 13:14

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

If, in the light of this truth, any dare to say that sinful humanity cannot resist temptation or live above sin if they walk in the Spirit, they are elevating the power of the devil and sin above the power of God.

Romans 8:2

...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

This is the glorious truth of the gospel which must give all believers everlasting hope in this world of sin.

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

Such a conclusion is unscriptural. While it is true that Christ is the “last Adam,” it qualifies in what sense Christ is like Adam.

1 Corinthians 15:45

So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

To go beyond this qualification is to take liberty not warranted by the Word of God. In Romans 5:12-21, Adam and Christ are compared and contrasted:

Romans 5:12-21

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned — To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no

law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In reading this passage, it becomes clear in what sense Christ resembles Adam. It is not in nature, but in representation. Just as all

men were present in the first Adam, when by his representative sin he ruined his posterity, so God united all men to Christ, qualifying Him to be the second or “last Adam.”

1 Corinthians 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Ephesians 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Thus, by His obedience, all men were legally justified unto life in Him.

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

It is only in this sense that Scripture makes a comparison between Adam and Christ. Just as what Adam did affected the whole human

race, similarly what Christ did affected all mankind (Romans 5:15, 18).

Romans 5:15,18

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ...Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

To go beyond this comparison and identify Christ's human nature with Adam's sinless nature, before his fall, is to add to Scripture.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find Christ in any way compared with Adam in terms of nature. On the contrary, Christ, as the "son of man" is called the Son of David and of Abraham...

Matthew 1:1

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham....

...both of whom had sinful flesh; or He is referred to as being "made in the likeness of men."

Philippians 2:7

...Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Hebrews 2:16-17

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

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

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

Matthew 1:21

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18,24

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ...But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

To appreciate this salvation, sin must be understood in the light of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. At the heart of this controversy lies the issue between God's law founded on the principle of selfless love (agape), which "seeketh not her own..."

1 Corinthians 13:5

It [Love] does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

...and the law of sin founded on the principle of the love of self.

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Philippians 2:21

For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

These two opposite principles met and fought each other in the humanity of Christ. On the one hand, Satan, working through Christ's flesh, desperately tried to entice the mind of Christ to consent to self-will, while on the other hand, the Holy Spirit working through the mind of Christ never yielded. Thus, every

attempt on Satan's part failed, for Christ's response was always, "Not My (self) will, but Thine be done."

John 4:34

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

John 5:30

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Matthew 26:39

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

This battle, which began the moment Christ was old enough to choose for Himself, ended at the cross when Satan, using the full driving force of temptations arising from sinful flesh, tempted Christ to come down from the cross and save Himself.

Luke 23:35-37

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah,

the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

But when Christ refused to yield and was obedient “even unto death,” Satan’s kingdom along with his principle of the love of self was totally defeated forever.

Philippians 2:8

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

John 12:31

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

Romans 8:2-3

...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh....

This victory is a vital part of the good news of the gospel:

John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Here is John’s definition of “world”:

1 John 2:16; 5:4

For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world. ...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

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

Those who teach that a person need not have a sinful nature in order to be tempted, and, therefore, Christ's supposedly sinless nature was tempted and subject to the possibility of falling, may be making a correct statement in and of itself. But the fact is that Scripture clearly states that Christ was "in all points tempted like as we are."

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin.

This means that Christ had to be tempted through His flesh even as we are, since temptation to fallen sinful man is defined as being "drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

James 1:14

...But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

The real issue in Christ's earthly life was not that He could be tempted or that He was subject to the possibility of falling as Adam did; the issue was, could Christ resist Satan and defeat temptation, the principle of self-seeking, in sinful human nature? Man's real problem is not only that he is born with certain sinful tendencies, but (as Christ Himself declared) sinful man is in bondage or slavery to sin and the devil.

John 8:34

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Romans 3:9

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.

Romans 6:16

Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Romans 7:14

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

Acts 8:23

For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.

2 Peter 2:19

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity — for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

1 John 3:6-8

No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.

This was not true of Adam or his nature before the Fall. Hence, Adam’s temptation in Eden and his fall must never be identified with our temptations and failures. The sinless Adam had no “self” that needed constantly to be denied or crucified. But Christ had to bear a cross all His life, on which self had to be crucified.

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

It is true that the fundamental issue in every temptation is the same, for temptation to sin is simply being enticed to say “No” to God, and live independently of Him, following self-will instead of God’s will

of love. But while no fundamental difference may exist between Adam's temptation and ours, a world of difference exists in the actual struggle or battle against the temptation itself. For if sin is to say "No" to God or live independently of Him, then our basic definition of sinful nature must be a bent toward self-love or independence from God. Paul clearly brings this out in describing mankind's sin problem in Romans 1:18-23.

Romans 1:18-23

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

By very nature sinful man is self-seeking and self-dependent, and sinful tendencies are simply different manifestations of the principle of love of self. This, in fact, is the primary meaning of the Hebrew word rendered "iniquity."

Psalm 51:5

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This was not true of Adam as God created him. Consequently, Adam was tempted to sin in a nature dominated by holiness, and hence his failure is inexcusable. Satan tempts us in a nature that is dominated by “the law of sin” (love of self), a nature that naturally seeks its own way. (See Isaiah 53:6, just above.)

Philippians 2:21

For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Adam’s sinless or holy flesh was subject to the law of God and, in fact, he delighted in it, while our carnal nature is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” in and of itself.

Romans 8:7

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

There was perfect harmony, unity, and agreement between Adam's sinless nature and the Spirit of God who indwelt Him; but in the case of the born-again believer, the Spirit and the flesh are at war with each other.

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

For Adam to sin was unnatural and an extremely hard thing for him to do; but for sinful man, sin is enjoyable to the sinful nature, and the most natural thing (he feels) to do.

Romans 7:14-23

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing.

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Adam could be justified by keeping the law; but in our case:

Romans 3:20, 28

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. ...For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Galatians 2:16

...Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Adam's sin cannot be explained for it is the "mystery of iniquity," revealing the power of the devil; with us it is the opposite, for when the righteousness of God is manifested in sinful flesh, it reveals God's power over sin and the devil, and is referred to as "the

mystery of godliness” — which mystery was first manifested in Christ, and through Him made available to us by faith.

1 Timothy 3:16

Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

Colossians 1:27

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

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

the Fall. This in turn will open our eyes to appreciate how great a salvation Christ has wrought out for us.

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

If Christ's temptations were greater than ours in a sinless human nature because of the inherent divine power available to him without faith, then is it not true that we must also confess that Adam's temptation was greater than ours, since his natural ability to do righteousness, inherent in his sinless nature, was greater than ours? In which case, we must also admit that it was much easier for Adam to sin (be self-dependent) than it is for us, and certainly this would make his sin excusable, besides undermining God's perfect creation.

Further, if it was extremely hard for Christ to be God-dependent because of His own inherent divine power, should not the very opposite be true of us because of our inherent weaknesses? Should it not be very easy for us to be God-dependent? Yet we must all confess that to live by faith (i.e., God-dependent) involves a

constant fight, as well as self-denial and acceptance of the principle of the cross.

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

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

John 5:30

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

John 6:38

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

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

We must realize that the principle of self-love is foreign to God's nature, or for that matter, sinless human nature which He created. The law of the love of self was originated by the devil, and with which he infected the human race at the Fall.

Isaiah 14:12-14

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn!
You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!
You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

If Christ had assumed a sinless human nature without the inclination to sin, He obviously did not have self-love as part of His very nature

to contend with, and, therefore, Satan could not tempt Him through the flesh as he does us.

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

Again, if Christ's flesh was void of the "law of sin," the law of self-love, then His flesh need not have suffered each time He refused to yield to temptation. But we read that "he himself suffered when he was tempted"...

Hebrews 2:18

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

...and that He was made "perfect through sufferings..."

Hebrews 2:10

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

...and that He learned “obedience by the things which He suffered.”

Hebrews 5:8

Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered....

Christ's victory was attained in His mind, because it was surrendered to the control of the Spirit. But this involved suffering in the flesh, since it was deprived of its own way, that is, sin.

This is how Peter expressed the conflict:

1 Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

What is true of Christ must be true of us, because the flesh He assumed was the likeness of our sinful flesh. Had Adam successfully resisted the devil's temptation, this would not have involved crucifying the flesh or human nature. But for Christ, as it must be with the believer, victory over sin involves the principle of the cross.

Galatians 5:24

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

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

1 John 4:1-3

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

2 John 7

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

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

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

Revelation 18:1

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

Colossians 1:27

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Much more than what Adam failed to do was accomplished by our Saviour, for He produced the perfect righteousness of God in the likeness of sinful flesh. And herein lies the true sinlessness of Christ and the fullness and power of His gospel. God did the “impossible” by producing perfect righteousness in our sinful flesh in Christ Jesus. And if only we by faith will obey this truth and allow the Holy Spirit to indwell and dominate us, then also He will reveal His power in the “body” of Christ, the church.

2 Corinthians 2:16

To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?

1 John 5:4

...For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

This, too, is righteousness by faith.

It is, therefore, the knowledge of this truth, Christ’s righteousness produced in our sinful flesh, that gives every believer the hope of glory. Let us, therefore, abide in Him, and, thus, make ourselves totally available to Him so that we may walk “even as He walked.”

1 John 2:6

Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Chapter 7

Jesus Christ, the God-Man Saviour

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

1 Corinthians 1:30

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

According to W.W. Prescott, a nineteen century preacher, this truth constitutes the very heart of the Christian message:

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

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

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

And this is the most glorious truth in Christianity. It is Christianity itself, it is the very core and life and heart of Christianity. He took our flesh, and our humanity was found in him, and what he did,

humanity did in him.” (W.W. Prescott, “The Divine-Human Family,” 1895 General Conference Bulletin, pp. 8-9).

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

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

Jesus Christ at the Incarnation

Two Distinct Opposite Natures United in One Person

In order for Christ to legally qualify to be our substitute and representative, His divinity had to be united to our corporate fallen humanity that needed redeeming. It is in the incarnation that these two distinct opposite natures were united together in one person and Christ became the second Adam. This is the in Christ motif.

The Paradox

As God, Christ Was:

1. Son of God

Luke 1:35

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

2. Self-Existing

John 1:4

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

3. Spirit

John 4:24

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

4. Equal with God

Philippians 2:6

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;...

5. Sinless

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6. Independent

John 10:18

“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

7. Immortal

1 Timothy 1:17

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

8. Lawgiver

James 4:12

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you — who are you to judge your neighbor?

As Man, Christ Was Made:

1. Son of Man

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

2. Of a Woman

Galatians 4:4

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law....

3. Flesh

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

4. A Slave of God

Philippians 2:7

...rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

5. Sin

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6. God-Dependent

John 5:19,30

Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ...By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

7. Mortal

Hebrews 2:14-15

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

8. Under Law

Galatians 4:4

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,....

Jesus Christ in the Resurrection

The Two Natures Became One, Sharing The Same Eternal Life

On the cross our corporate condemned human life died eternally in Christ (the wages of sin).

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

In the resurrection God gave the human race the eternal life of His Son.

1 John 5:11-12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

All that we are, as a result of the Fall, Christ was made at the incarnation; that through His life, death, and resurrection all that He is we were made in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

This constitutes the good news of the gospel.

By Nature We Are

Spiritually dead, but, in Christ, were made spiritually alive.

Ephesians 2:5

...Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

Sinners, but, in Christ, were made righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Sinful, but in Christ, were made holy and blameless.

Ephesians 1:4

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Condemned, but, in Christ, were justified to life.

Romans 5:18

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

Sons of man, but, in Christ, were made sons of God.

1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Hell-bound, but, in Christ, were made to sit in heavenly places.
Ephesians 2:6

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,...

Mortal, but, in Christ, were made immortal.

2 Timothy 1:8-10

So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Poor, but, in Christ, were made rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Lower than the angels, but, in Christ, were made joint heirs.

Romans 8:17

Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Hebrews 2:5-11

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet.” In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

Surely, every believer who realizes this truth will join Paul in exclaiming:

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Chapter 8

The Fall and Restoration of Man

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

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

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

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

rule. Christ assumed this sinful condemned humanity in order to save such a race.

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

Spiritually. Unlike the animal kingdom, man was created a spiritual being. Modern studies in anthropology have demonstrated that even among the most primitive societies, man seeks to worship some form of a god. It was God's original purpose to dwell in man, and, through him, reveal His glory.

“From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 161.)

But when Adam rebelled against God, this purpose was brought to naught. The Holy Spirit immediately left him, and Adam's life was plunged into darkness. Thus was fulfilled the warning God gave our first parents:

Genesis 2:17

“...But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

The immediate result of the Fall therefore was spiritual death. And this death was passed on to all men, so that all men are born in this world spiritually dead, alienated from God.

Ephesians 2:1,5

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,... made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

Isaiah 59:2

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Morally. In sinless Eden, God created Adam in His image. This meant that Adam's nature was dominated by selfless love (agape). There was perfect harmony between God's holy law and Adam's moral nature, so that keeping the law was spontaneous and natural. However, at the Fall, that sinless nature became sinful, so that Adam's nature was now dominated by the law of sin or love of self.

“Through disobedience Adam's powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own

strength, to resist the power of evil.” (Steps to Christ, p. 7, Ellen G. White.)

This is what Isaiah meant when he said:

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

It is this bent to self-love that the Bible calls iniquity, that makes all our good works polluted and, therefore, condemned as “filthy rags” in God’s eyes.

Isaiah 64:6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

In this sense man’s moral nature, since the fall, is totally depraved.

Physically. As long as our first parents had access to the tree of life, their physical nature knew no degeneration. But after being expelled from the Garden of Eden because of sin, man became prone to sickness, fatigue, and aging, culminating in death. And death being the “Grim Reaper,” Scripture tells us that all humanity has become, “all their lifetimes subject to bondage” to the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:15

...And free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

To redeem us from every one of these consequences of the Fall, Christ came to this world as Saviour. And in order to do this:

Hebrews 2:17

For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

With this in view, let us observe how fallen humanity was redeemed from the three-fold effects of sin, in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

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

When Paul told the Ephesians they were made spiritually alive, he used a past historic tense (Aorist) to indicate an objective truth realized in Christ at the Incarnation, and not their subjective experience.

Ephesians 2:5

...Made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

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

A true believer is one who has repented and, as the Greek word implies, has had a change of mind, so that his will is in harmony with God and His law.

Romans 7:22,25

For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ...Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Paul refers to this converted mind as the inner or new man.

Ephesians 3:16; 4:24

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,... and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

This is not true of the unbeliever, whose mind is still unconverted and is in harmony with sin and the flesh.

Ephesians 2:3

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Romans 8:7

The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Unlike the unbeliever, the believer, who has been baptized into Christ, has become spiritually alive through the new birth experience.

Romans 8:9-11

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

And this experience is based on the objective truth that he was first made spiritually alive in Christ when divinity was united to our corporate sinful humanity.

Hence, the new birth, the believer's first experience at conversion, is the result of a reality already prepared for all men in Christ. And it is this new birth, referred to as "first fruits of the Spirit" or regeneration that changes the believer's whole situation, so that now holy living and law-keeping are brought within his reach.

Romans 8:23

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Titus 3:5

...He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,....

While fallen man is totally depraved so that, in and of himself, he cannot be subject to the law, this same person, when made spiritually alive with God's Spirit dwelling in him, finds holy living a possibility.

Romans 8:9-10

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

Galatians 5:16, 22-23

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

To such a converted person, Christ's holy life becomes his example and goal.

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Romans 13:14

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

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

Luke 9:23

“Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

While the mind of Jesus was fully surrendered to God’s will, so that not even an inclination or propensity to sin rested there, His flesh was dominated by the principle that affects all mankind — the principle of self. Consequently, holy living to Him was not simply a matter of following the natural inclinations of His human nature, as in the case of sinless Adam, but involved a constant battle against “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

1 John 2:15-16

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world.

When He declared to His disciples that He has overcome the world...

John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

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

Such an understanding of Christ’s holy living gives a deeper and more complete meaning to His redemptive mission. In this context, The International Critical Commentary makes a most interesting observation with reference to Paul’s statement in Romans 8:3, wherein the Apostle declared that in the likeness of sinful flesh Christ “condemned sin in the flesh”:

“But if we recognize that Paul believed it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the unremitting warfare of His whole earthly life by which He forced our rebellious nature to render a perfect obedience to God.”

According to Peter, all the sufferings of Christ that resulted in His perfect character took place in His flesh.

1 Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

And this could only be possible because His flesh was the likeness of our sinful flesh, and was denied sinful desires. But this is an

essential part of the good news of the gospel that must fill us with deep, heartfelt appreciation of His righteousness, and make us willing in turn to suffer in the flesh that He may be glorified.

Romans 8:16-18

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Having produced perfect obedience by completely and totally overcoming the flesh for 33 years, Christ took this condemned flesh and surrendered it to the wages of sin on His cross. Thus He “condemned sin in the flesh” by both His active and passive obedience and forever became the author and finisher of salvation to all who believe.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him....

In this knowledge of full and complete salvation rests the hope of fallen man. And this hope is twofold: “Justification unto life,” as

well as “sanctification of the Spirit,” and both become effective by faith alone.

Physically. When Christ assumed our sinful humanity, not only did He identify Himself with our moral weaknesses, but He also took our physical infirmities. Thus He became subject to fatigue, aging, and death. But having redeemed and cleansed our sinful humanity at the cross, Jesus rose from the dead with a glorified body, both morally as well as physically. Therefore, at His ascension, He took this redeemed body to heaven where it is reserved for us at the second coming. This is the “blessed hope” of all born-again believers.

Romans 8:23-25

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

In the light of this full and wonderful good news, the humanity of Christ is indeed “everything to us.” This perfect, full, and complete gospel in Christ which was once preached by the apostles must again be restored to our dark and doomed world before the end comes.

Hebrews 2:3

...How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Amen.