

“MADE LIKE ... HIS BRETHREN”

*“to make reconciliation for the sins of
the people”*

DONALD KARR SHORT

Christ Was “Made Like ... His Brethren”

Thoughtful Seventh-day Adventists are perplexed and constrained to ponder the reason why the second coming of the Savior has been so long delayed. "Time" is expensive. The longer the delay, the greater the cost in human woe and suffering for the majority of earth's inhabitants. This plight of the human race must be of great concern to the heavenly host. God's justice and His reputation are facing a crisis. What can heaven do to bring the reign of sin to an end? The Creator's investment in humanity is yet to be fully appreciated even by Christians.

In order to "see" Jesus, to "comprehend" Him, we must realize how close He has come to us. The author believes that the truth about Jesus is far better good news than is popularly *realized*.

This perceptive insight into how He was "made *like* unto His brethren" is refreshing reading. While Jesus Himself must wait to come again as He promised, He suffers in sympathy with all the agony there is in the world. This book explores the truth from His perspective.

TO THOSE WHO LONG FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

"It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." — Hebrews 2:17

Like every book that has ever been written, this one has had the help of other interested persons. In particular there have been young people who sense the gravity of the times and are studying to know the whole truth of the plan of salvation. Their prayers and spiritual insight have made large contributions to this work. My settled conviction is that the end is dependent upon our knowing the issues in the cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan, and placing ourselves unquestionably on the right side.

—Donald Karr Short (1915-2004)

The author of this book dedicated his entire professional life to mission service in Africa, and his retirement years to helping spread abroad the knowledge of the message of Christ's righteousness. This volume he devoted to a study of the nearness of the Savior in contrast to the popular views of His farness from us. His incisive writings are arousing increased interest worldwide among thoughtful people.

—The Publishers

Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 – Is There Confusion Among Adventists	5
Chapter 2 – Why Should Adventists Be Confused?	11
Chapter 3 – We Have Created Our Own Confusion	15
Chapter 4 – When Will We See Our Confusion?	20
Chapter 5 – The Word Will Remove Our Confusion	30
Chapter 6 – Truth Knows No Confusion	35
Chapter 7 – Babylon Creates Confusion	44
Chapter 8 – The Gospel Destroys Confusion	51
Chapter 9 – A Diagnosis Without Confusion	60
Chapter 10 – No Confusion: Brethren Made Like Him	65
Postlogue	75
Appendix	80

Introduction

The Bible leaves no question: there is a True Christ and there is a false christ. The Lord Jesus warned His people that in the end-time there would be much confusion about the two. Misunderstanding regarding the "author and finisher of our faith" would be so clever that many would be deceived and "if it were possible . . . the very elect" would be among them (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24). The gospel of Mark and Luke record this same solemn warning (Mark 13:22; Luke 21:8).

The apostle Paul speaks frankly of "another Jesus" whom he did not preach and who would be accompanied by "another spirit" and "another gospel." His concern for the church constrained him to warn the saints that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:4, 14).

Paul was so certain of a possible counterfeit Christ and a spurious gospel that he calls down a curse upon any who should preach such error (Galatians 1:6, 9). With equal force, John warns that the recognition of truth and error would depend upon the confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (1 John 4:1-3). The Greek word for "flesh" is "sarx" and in this epistle of John as well as in his gospel the meaning is fallen sinful flesh (John 1:14). This draws a line between the "christ" of Rome and the true Christ. This "sarx" is the "totality of all that is essential to manhood."¹

Christ was not a phantom. He was a real man. Docetism and Gnosticism, that would make Him only *appear* as man, are little more than pagan philosophies masquerading under the cloak of Christianity. The ultimate understanding and appreciation of the atonement depends upon seeing Christ in the "flesh," taking fallen human nature. Only in this way can He "make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

¹ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Oliphants Ltd., (London, 1958), p. 107.

If Christianity warrants the consideration and recognition it has claimed for two millennia, there must not be uncertainty about its Author. People who make a profession of this religion must know the real Christ from the counterfeit. Uncertainty and confusion in the church on this vital point place doubt upon the entire body of beliefs, and question the reason for its existence.

Seventh-day Adventists are but one small segment of humanity professing to be Christians, but they above all others must know the genuine Founder of the faith. Within the Protestant Christian community Adventists claim a special place. In particular they do not accept the pagan/papal teachings of the church of Rome. But will their beliefs prove any more seaworthy than others in the ocean of doctrines that circle the earth? Will this vessel called Christianity be more dependable than others? Is there truth in Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Islam or Judaism? Is the port of destination the same for each "ship," and does the chart on each craft mark out the same route? The plight of humanity demands an answer.

Is it arrogant for a corporate body to consider its doctrines unique among these philosophies, distinct even within the Christian world? Dare Seventh-day Adventists make such a claim? True or false, reason dictates that all these contradictory beliefs cannot be right. But there is ingrained in human reasoning a common want to believe in a supreme being. There is yet to be found a race on earth that does not have some belief in a god.² Recent events in the Communist world prove that decades of severe persecution with the most persistent opposition to religion can-not kill the human spirit. This historical fact supports the word of John that God gives light to everyone who comes into the world (John 1:9). This allows a place for Adventists who profess to have "light." In the cosmos they have an appointment to fill. If the course of history can teach us anything, we must know it is time to understand that destiny now.

Within the eleven major religions from ancient Iran until now,³ the only one with a central character essential to its existence has been Christianity. Every group in the world that has taken the name Christian claims some connection with the historical figure of a man called Jesus Christ. Other than this Person there is little to bond these groups together. Diverse opinions question who He was and how He relates to humanity.

As unbelievable as it may seem, even Seventh-day Adventists have reached a point where they are wandering in a fog of uncertainty, caught in this web of divergent opinion. The entanglement has become severe. The church has even been cautioned not to discuss the human nature of Christ as this supposedly is not one of the 27 doctrinal beliefs and therefore not essential to salvation.⁴

What truth is essential for salvation? Can anything be more important than knowing the One who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)? The Scriptures never hint that the nature of Christ is unimportant and therefore can be passed over lightly.

The Scriptures do make clear that the time will come when the inhabitants of earth will be made drunk with the wine of false doctrine. The apostate church, portrayed as a woman, will be like a harlot unfaithful to her espoused Lover (Revelation 14:8; 17:2; 18:3). She follows her spiritually immoral ways because she does not know the One who became "flesh" to captivate her affections.

When He lived among men, His nature was not so different from the children of Adam that there was no way for ordinary people to know and understand Him. He was one of the common people, and not exempt from the routine matters of life. The popular religions of the world demand a Messiah beyond reach, different, exempt, and secluded from common people.

² See: Geoffrey Parrinder, editor; *World Religions*, Facts on File Publications, (New York, 1983), p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

⁴ Biblical Research Institute, "An Appeal for Church Unity," p. 5, August 1989; *Adventist Review*, November 1, 1990, p. 4.

At the end-time when all nations become drunk with the wine of Babylon's fornication (Revelation 14:8), the world will have a supreme need to see a corporate body of people who know the difference between truth and error. They must be prepared to voice their convictions. To justify their existence Seventh-day Adventists must be that people. Above all others, their calling demands that they know the One after whom they are named, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

March 1991

Chapter One

IS THERE CONFUSION AMONG ADVENTISTS?

Seventh-day Adventists claim to have the last message for a dying world, and thus they hold a unique place in history. If convinced of our calling, we also must accept responsibility for bearing a message that is beyond reproach. It must bring the world to decide between truth and error.

Such a mandate demands that we "know" the "Amen, the faithful and true witness" "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Revelation 3:14; Hebrews 12:2). To vacillate about who He was and who He is calls in question the entire plan of salvation. Certainty about His relationship to humanity is imperative "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The doctrines we proclaim in the end-time must grow out of understanding the Author of our faith. He is the Omega as well as the Alpha. There cannot be sound doctrine without really knowing Him. No taint of confusion will stand in the final test.

This adds startling urgency to the angel's mighty proclamation: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and she hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2). These are the words of "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness" (1:5). We need the unshakable conviction that He speaks the truth when He calls God's people to "come out of her ... that ye be not partakers of her sins" (18:4). The "wine" of Babylon produces drunkenness in anybody who drinks it, even Adventists.

Study given to the incarnation of Christ over the past years should have kept Adventists from confusion. The writings of Ellen White provide scores of confirmations that He took "upon Himself human nature, a nature inferior to His heavenly nature." As strongly as words can speak, she says that He "did not make believe take human nature; He did verily take it, He did in reality possess human nature."¹ To make sure we appreciate how close He came to humanity and yet was sinless, we read repeatedly that "in taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin."²

In the 1888 era the Lord tried to make His people see that they have a Saviour who knows all their temptations. This truth was to prepare a people for translation. Some who had even then tasted the "wine" of Babylon were not sure. In 1890 the confusion came to the surface without a shadow of double meaning:

¹ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 246, 247.

² *Ibid.*, p. 256.

Letters have been coming in to me, affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if He had, He would have fallen under similar temptations. If He did not have man's nature, He could not be our example. If He was not a partaker of our nature, He could not have been tempted as man has been. If it were not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be our helper. ... He withstood the temptation, through the power that man may command. He laid hold on the throne of God, and there is not a man or woman who may not have access to the same help through faith in God. Man may become a partaker of the divine nature.³

This glorious promise displays a unity of purpose between heaven and earth that staggers the mind. What Christ was in oneness with the human family, the human family may be in oneness with Him. Here is a union that can only be compared to marriage. This makes no provision for cheap grace. If the Adventist body of Christ would believe the counsel given, we could live the more abundant life Christ promised. Church membership would not seem like a long list of prohibitions. In the words of the modern martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

When people complain, for instance, that they find it hard to believe, it is a sign of deliberate or unconscious disobedience. It is all too easy to put them off by offering the remedy of cheap grace. ... Unbelief thrives on cheap grace, for it is determined to persist in disobedience. ... [The] sinner has drugged himself with cheap and easy grace.⁴

The remnant church has the solid counsel: "Men may have a power to resist evil—a power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master; a power that will place them where they may overcome as Christ overcame. Divinity and humanity may be combined in them."⁵ With heaven's assurance that we may overcome as Christ overcame, there is no need for any confusion among us.

Unfortunately articles published in our church journal, the *Adventist Review*, that rightly call the members to "unity" and "balance" contain also confusion with sentiments which Augustine advocated. Sabbathkeepers are told that Jesus "became sin for us vicariously," that "Jesus only took the *'likeness of sinful flesh'*" [that is, not like but *unlike*]. This confusion runs counter to the Adventist conscience.

The thrust of this perplexing series constrained church members to write the editor and voice their concern. Some letters were published.⁶ But the confusion did not end with one series of six deviant articles. A further series of three articles advocating the same theology was published five weeks later.⁷

These articles leaned heavily upon decisions of church councils in past centuries—the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The former was called by Emperor Constantine the Great who was noted for his compromise of amalgamating paganism with Christianity. The latter established a dictum on the nature of Christ that became the test of orthodoxy for the Roman Catholic Church. Surely there must be a better basis for establishing Adventist truth.

The second series of three articles in the *Review*, puts the question to the church, Was Jesus "like Adam or like us?" The answer given: "[We] lack any definitive statement in Scripture. ... He was unlike us. ... He was unique." What will Adventists accept as "definitive" statements? The wording in Romans is clear: "Jesus Christ our Lord, ... was made of the seed [Greek: spermatos] of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). Paul's definition brings "us" into the picture and adds: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in

³ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 408, 409; originally published in, *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890.

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Macmillan Publishing Company, (New York, 1963) first paperback edition, pp. 74, 75, 77.

⁵ Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890.

⁶ See articles: *Adventist Review*, January 18, 25; February 1, 8, 15, 22, 1990; Letters, April 26, 1990.

⁷ See articles: *Adventist Review*, March 29, April 19, 16, 1990.

the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (8:3, 4). The "seed of David [was] according to the flesh." It was not mysteriously outside the stream of fallen humanity. God sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh" and He overcame sin in that flesh. We dare not deny what Scripture says.

The record in Hebrews is even more "definitive" beyond question, for it proclaims that Christ took part of "flesh and blood" like all children of the race. He took not "the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed [Greek: *spermatos*] of Abraham." It was necessary in all things pertaining to God, to fulfill the plan of salvation, that He should "be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:11-18). To be "made like unto his brethren" means to take a fallen nature. This is the only nature known to the children of Adam. But Jesus did not participate in man's sin.

"Seed of Abraham," "seed of David," "made like unto his brethren," "flesh and blood,"—this is "definitive" Scripture. There is not the slightest inference that "He was unlike us." To the Scripture may be added hundreds of Ellen White's statements in the same vein, each telling the church Christ took man's fallen nature, that He was "made like unto his brethren."

A Private Letter Made Public

Definitive Scripture with hundreds of Ellen White statements are laid aside in deference to *a few sentences* lifted from her unpublished private letter to W. L. H. Baker, a church member in New Zealand at the end of the last century. There is no record of what he wrote to Ellen White. Frequently Adventist scholars who propose that Christ did not take man's fallen nature use this one source to support their idea. They claim that Christ took the nature of Adam before the fall. But the letter will not substantiate this. We must read it in full to know what Ellen White wrote. Her presentation of this subject is not self-contradictory.⁸

This will be seen by considering a few passages from her letter. She describes the human nature of Christ in the same way she portrays it in hundreds of her other published writings.

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

In treating upon the humanity of Christ... guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. ...

The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know...

He did humble Himself when He saw He was in fashion as a man, that He might understand the force of all temptations wherewith man is beset. ...

The first Adam fell; the second Adam held fast to God and His Word under the most trying circumstances, and His faith in His Father's goodness, mercy, and love did not waver for one moment."

⁸ The portion of Ellen White's letter to W. L. H. Baker relevant to the nature of Christ, may be found in: *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen White Comments, vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129; (Letter 8, 1895).

This leaves no room for various interpretations. The letter says, "Took upon Himself human nature ... tempted in all points as human nature is tempted." She explains the reason for His condescension. It was not that He might merely know what it feels like to be tired, hungry, thirsty, or sleepy. His taking our nature had a spiritual purpose. He became a man that "He might understand the force of all temptations wherewith man is beset," but nevertheless He "held fast to God and His Word ... His faith ... did not waver for one moment."

Every human being knows how temptation to sin comes; it came in the same way to Christ. His lack of "evil propensity" did not free Him from temptation. "His humanity as combined with divinity" does not put a wall between Him and His people or "exempt" Him from any of our temptations.

In the same Volume 7 of the SDA Bible Commentary where the Baker letter is found, Ellen White sets out on page 943 the assets and liabilities of "propensity." Her comments make clear that Christ and His people are on mutual ground. God is no respecter of persons:

We must know what He is to those He has ransomed. We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. ...

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. ... God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. ...

Scarcely can the human mind comprehend what is the breadth and depth and height of the spiritual attainments that can be reached by becoming partakers of the divine nature. The human agent who daily yields obedience to God, who becomes a partaker of the divine nature, finds pleasure daily in keeping the commandments of God; for he is one with God. It is essential that he hold as vital a relation with God as does the Son with the Father. He understands the oneness that Christ prayed might exist between the Father and the Son.

The message is clear; our Lord Jesus Christ had no "propensity to sin." With equal force *we are assured* "we need not retain one sinful propensity." We must read this affirmation for what it says: "His humanity [was] combined with divinity. ... [His] humanity blended with divinity," but equally certain for those "He has ransomed" will be the realization that it is "our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature." As we thus partake of this divine nature our hereditary and cultivated tendencies, our sinful, evil "inherent propensities" with which we are born, will be "cut away" from our characters, and "we are made a living power for good." The fact that "we need not retain one sinful propensity" confirms that sinful propensity cannot mean "inherited guilt" or "original sin" as promoted by Augustine and Calvin.

This word "propensity" as used by Ellen White is straightforward. There is no hidden meaning or deep mystery in it. Christ had no ingrained *irresistible* longing to sin. He was tempted, but by faith He rejected the temptation. This is a manifestation of "the gospel of Christ ... the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

We "may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God." This immense spiritual attainment of becoming partakers of the divine nature leads us to having "as vital a relation with God as does the Son with the Father." Thus we can begin to fathom what Jesus meant when He prayed: "Neither pray I for these alone [not just His disciples], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20, 21).

The universe is waiting to see a people who are "one with God" having spiritual understanding such as Jesus had when He was "made like unto His brethren."

Jesus Probes the Future

Jesus had good reason to raise the serious question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The original language adds significance to this question: "shall He find the faith on the earth?" With innumerable philosophies developed over centuries and in the midst of the vast uncertainties of life, Jesus proposes a solid foundation. There will be "the faith" at the end of time when the Son of man shall return. This opens real possibilities for ordinary people to have the mind of Christ with His law written in the human heart (Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 8:10). Faith is a heart appreciation of the character of the Son of God who became the Son of man.

Depending upon the conviction Seventh-day Adventists have, these words of Jesus about faith present serious implications. Are we arrogant to consider that we could have "the" faith that will be unique and distinct in the end-time of the world? The three angels' messages must provide a clear understanding of God's purposes so that Adventists may be free from confusion. They should have unanimous discernment that befits a people who talk about translation.

Christians in past ages could not have known "the" faith peculiar to the day when "the Son of man cometh." The final generation that lives when Babylon is cast down must have an advanced, penetrating knowledge of the Author of that faith. The final generation has more to learn than we have yet discerned—more than in all past ages.

If, as Jesus suggests, there is an end-time faith, it may have some connection with another statement He made about "truth." In His long discussion with the disciples recorded in John 15 and 16, He assures them that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will guide "into all truth" (16:13). The disciples did not have the fulness of "all truth." Sacred history had many chapters still to be unfolded. Today the church awaits the final fulfillment of this promise. The last generation must expect to know more. "All truth" cannot make provision for plural theology, with "other faiths," or various creeds.

One thing is clear, Jesus said that He had many things to tell them but they could not then bear them. Their understanding was too dim (John 16:12). There is no record that He ever told them "all truth." The profound blessing of total understanding is reserved for that time of trouble when "Michael shall stand up." Then His people will be wise and shine as the firmament, the seal of the book will be opened as knowledge is increased (Daniel 12:1-4). In that hour the need for clear discernment of truth will be greater than at any other time in all history.

In this special session with the disciples, Jesus said that all the human race had ever hoped for, the desire of nations, would be found in just one truth. Problems would cease when His people understand that "this is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). History verifies that this complete understanding is yet in the future. There have been only one Enoch and one Elijah. This does not satisfy the conditions of deliverance for those "found written in the book," nor the "many of them that sleep in the dust" (Daniel 12:1, 2). A whole generation of Enochs and Elijahs must know "all truth."

Accepting the word of Jesus means that eternal life is to "know" Jesus Christ. Stated another way, there can be no eternal life until He is known. Jesus said that He came to make known the Father, and if they had seen Him they had seen the Father. They did not know the Father because they did not know Him (John 14:7-9).

Logic demands that the second coming *of* Christ is delayed because there is not yet a unified group, a church, a corporate body, a generation of people, who fully know Him. Without such knowledge His people could not recognize the Son of Man nor appreciate the implications of eternal life.

But there is a greater problem. They could not distinguish the true Christ from any counterfeit that might appear. Until they "know" Him, He must refrain from appearing and thus create a situation in which the enemy could claim victory.

Among Adventists great confusion persists about the human nature of the Author of salvation. This must be corrected. The Review's advocated answer of silence will not provide a solution. The suggestion that "these topics need to be laid aside and not urged upon our people as necessary issues"⁹ evades the truth and will not bear analysis. The church cannot fulfill its mandate in the end-time until it clearly comprehends "the faith" demanded for the hour "when the Son of man cometh." Understanding the nature of Christ correctly is basic to understanding the gospel.

⁹ Biblical Research Institute, "An Appeal for Church Unity," pp. 5, 6, August 1989.

Chapter Two

WHY SHOULD ADVENTISTS BE CONFUSED?

Years before there was a Seventh-day Adventist church, when the early believers studied seriously why Jesus had not returned in 1844, they were not confused about His nature. Ellen White portrays their sentiments: "After the great disappointment ... the truth was opened point by point, and entwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies. The searchers after truth felt that the identification of Christ with their nature and interest was complete."¹

A few years later in 1858, the Lord's messenger expressed this theology to the early believers as she explained the plan of salvation: "Jesus [told the angels] that he should take man's fallen nature, and his strength would not be even equal to theirs. ... [Satan] told his angels that when Jesus should take fallen man's nature, he could overpower him, and hinder the accomplishment of the plan of salvation."²

The early believers could understand that Christ took a fallen nature like His people. Ellen White preached and published it throughout that century without a shadow of turning. Never did she suggest that Christ came to this world with the nature of Adam before the Fall. Much research has been made available to the church in various publications by scholars and interested laypersons. The evidence is massive and convincing.³

No jury would fail to get the message in the following passages, which are but a fragment of many: As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17). If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As a man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. ... His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life. ...

[God] permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss.⁴

These are simply the reasonable echoes of Scripture, and they do not stand alone in the theological world. The Bible references in English and Greek leave no doubt when read for what they say: "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of

¹ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 109, 110.

² Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, pp. 25, 27 (1858).

³ Some examples: Albert H. Olesen, *Think Straight About the Incarnation*, private document, n.d., 176 pp.; Arthur Leroy Moore, *Theology in Crisis*, Life Seminars, Inc., (Corpus Christi, TX, 1980) 443 pp.; Ralph Larson, *The Word Was Made Flesh*, The Cherrystone Press (Cherry Valley, CA, 1986) 365 pp., over a thousand references; Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 246-288; *Desire of Ages*, scores of references; etc.

⁴ Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 24, 48, 49.

Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:16, 17); He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15); "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Romans 8:3, 4); "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

With this fragment of evidence from the vast amount available, no court could bring in a garbled, multiple-choice verdict about the nature of Christ. The Scriptures state, He was "made of a woman," like all humanity is "made." He was "the seed of Abraham," in the same lineage as Isaac and Jacob. Such a "child" can be none other than a member of the human race without equivocation, exception, or exemption. As a member of the human race His experiences must be those that the Scriptures verify—that is, "tempted like as we are." No human needs special training to know how temptations come. Jesus met the same kind.

The known history of many individuals in Christ's ancestry confirm that in His family tree there was every shade of fallen heredity. The above quotation states categorically, "Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors."

The significance of this law of heredity is set out in the ten commandments: "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:5). By deleting from their catechisms the second commandment the church of Rome removes this statement, and paves the way for their dogma of "the immaculate conception" which denies the biblical law of heredity.

Paul testifies unequivocally that Christ came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). This leaves no room for a Saviour who evaded the laws of heredity and came in the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall. There was no "sinful flesh" until after the Fall. "Sinful flesh" is the result of the Fall, thus an impossibility in a pre-Fall nature.

The concerted effort to tell the world church that "likeness" really means "unlikeness" creates an anomaly beyond explanation.⁵

When a child has the likeness of either parent, father or mother, the child is not called unlike the parents implying that it would be difficult to know who its parents were. On the contrary, the child is *like* the parents. If we read the Scriptures for what they say, there will be no need to rationalize. We will know that "likeness" means *like*, much more than similar. It means in the same image.

Scholars Other Than Adventists Understand

Extensive research published by Adventists in recent years confirms that Christ took fallen human nature and this research does not stand alone. Some scholars who have known nothing of our distinctive Seventh-day Adventist truths have come to the same understanding. Centuries before there was an Adventist, students of the Scriptures were clearly proclaiming this truth based upon their findings.

Going back to the third century, we see that already there was in the church contempt for the law, and the "falling away" spoken of by Paul and John had begun (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 John 2:18). A line was drawn between the true Christ and the antichrist, and champions of the gospel needed to take their stand.

One early stalwart was Gregory of Nyssa (331?—?396 A.D.) who, with his elder brother, Basil the Great, fought Arianism. Gregory is emphatic that Christ took the fullness of humanity and assumed human nature as it was after the Fall. He uses the Pauline text that Jesus was "made to be sin for us." "The word of the Apostle testifies that He became sin for

⁵ See: *Adventist Review*, February 8, 1990, pp. 8, 9.

us, who clothed Himself in our sinful nature."⁶ He was clear about this, but was tainted with the idea that there was some miracle of conception that cleansed the results of Adam's failure. This confusion exists to this day, but Gregory was certain that the Son of God assumed "fallen human nature."⁷

Harry Johnson supplies a line of notables in history who understood the scriptural record of Christ taking fallen human nature. They understood that this truth was imperative if redemption was to be effective. There were Felix of Urgel (c. A.D. 780) in Spain; Antoinette Bourignon (b. 1616) in France; Peter Poiret (b. 1646) in Germany; Johann Konrad Dippel (b. 1673) in Germany; Gottfried Menken (b. 1768) in Germany; Edward Irving (b. 1792) in Scotland; Thomas Erskine (b. 1788) in Scotland; Hermann Freidrich Kohlbrugge (b. 1803) in Holland; Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (b. 1810) in Germany; Eduard Bohl (b. 1836) in Germany; Hermann Bezzel (b. 1861) in Bavaria. Over the centuries these Bible students agreed that Christ took our "fallen human nature" and that this was vital to the redemption plan. The significance is clear when we sense that Christ could not have died had He not taken the flesh and nature of humanity after the Fall.⁸

Thinkers and scholars of past centuries do not stand alone. Men in our "time of the end" have also seen the importance of this truth. Karl Barth, the Swiss Protestant theologian, holds an important place in making this matter clear. He speaks concerning the human nature of Christ in relation to the Fall: "He is a man as we are, ... equal to us in the state and condition into which our disobedience has brought us."⁹ Like the other scholars mentioned, Barth affirms Christ did not sin even though He took our nature. He says:

He was not a sinful man. But inwardly and outwardly His situation was that of a sinful man. ...

There must be no weakening or obscuring of the saving truth that the nature which God assumed in Christ is identical with our nature as we see it in the light of the Fall. If it were otherwise, how could Christ be really like us? What concern would we have with Him? ...

Therefore in our state and condition He does not do what underlies and produces that state and condition, or what we in that state and condition continually do. Our unholy human existence, assumed and adopted by the Word of God, is a hallowed and therefore a sinless existence; in our unholy human existence the eternal Word draws near to us. In the hallowing of our unholy human existence He draws supremely and helpfully near to us. ...

Jesus did not run away from the state and situation of fallen man, but took it upon Himself, lived it and bore it Himself as the eternal Son of God. How could He have done so, if in His human existence He had not been exposed to real inward temptation and trial, if like other men He had not trodden an inner path, if He had not cried to God and wrestled with God in real inward need? It was in this wrestling, in which He was in solidarity with us to the uttermost, that there was done that which is not done by us, the will of God.¹⁰

Barth's deep insight comes very close to Adventist history. His theology makes Christ near to us. But his understanding is not unique. There are other modern theologians with similar understanding of the Scriptures. One such, J.A.T. Robinson said:

The first act in the drama of redemption is, self-identification of the Son of God *to the limit*, yet without sin, with the body of flesh in its fallen state. It is necessary to stress these words because the Christian theology has been extraordinarily reluctant to accept at their

⁶ Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour*, The Epworth Press, (London, 1962) p. 130; quoting from *De Vita Moysis*, PG XLIV.336. This author provides a wealth of data on the history, the theological reasons and the persons involved in upholding the scriptural record of Christ taking "fallen human nature."

⁷ Johnson, p. 132.

⁸ See Johnson for extended details of the various proponents and their theology.

⁹ Johnson, p. 167, quoting, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 151.

¹⁰ Johnson, pp. 168, 169, *ibid.* pp. 152, 153, 155, 156, 158.

face value, the bold, almost barbarous phrases which Paul uses to bring home the offence of the Gospel.¹¹

Harry Johnson suggests that this understanding of the nature of Christ is certain in the writings of Paul. He adds that it has not often been accepted because of doctrinal prejudice rather than "sound biblical exposition."¹²

Over the centuries these students have affirmed that the gospel requires a Christ who took fallen human nature. One such early theologian mentioned already is Felix of Urgel, who lived in Spain around A.D. 780. His understanding amplifies Adventist thinking. He stated that only as Christ took a human nature such as ours could there be a possibility of redemption. "Felix believed that if the atonement was to be real and valid and not a sham, Christ must have assumed the same human nature that was the common possession of mankind."¹³ He taught that this human nature possessed the full attributes of humanity. Christ had to take the nature that needed to be redeemed if redemption was to be effective.

In today's climate of women entering ever larger appointments, it is worthwhile to note Antoinette Bourignon. In France during the early 1600s, she made a place for herself as she proclaimed the fallen nature of Christ. As a young girl she sought to enter a Roman Catholic convent but was unable because she lacked money. After that she turned from the papacy and became a religious leader in her own right. Her study convinced her that "if Jesus Christ had not been pleased to take on him our Corrupt Will he could not have suffered, because in that Case all his Sufferings would have been insensible to him."¹⁴ She considered this doctrine had a redemptive significance and enabled Jesus to make the call, "Be ye followers of me."

In the time of Adventist pioneers there was Thomas Erskine. This Scottish advocate who later turned to theology wrote several works upholding the true gospel. His legal background led him to a clear scriptural understanding of the nature of Christ and in 1831, in support of his views, he published *The Brazen Serpent*. He assured his readers that if Christ had not taken our fallen nature, "he could not have tasted death for every man, and his resurrection could not necessarily have involved that of every other man."¹⁵

Other scholars bear the same testimony. In more recent times authors such as, T.F. Torrance, Nels F.S. Ferre, C.E.B. Cranfield, Harold Roberts, and Lesslie Newbigin, have written books presenting Christ as a Saviour who took upon Himself our sinful nature but lived a sinless human life. These scholars believe from their study of the Scriptures that Jesus lived as a man, and was subject to the fierce temptations of sin that we face. Their language shows clearly that in this human condition He lived a perfectly sinless life in the midst of sin, and that He met and overcame sin in our nature from within the enemy's territory.

None of this is to suggest that the theology of these scholars adds up to pure Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. Without an understanding of the sanctuary truth it is not possible to fit all the theological elements into a perfect temple of truth. Yet scholars knowing nothing of Adventist teachings have, from their study of the Scriptures, come to a conclusion that harmonizes with what the 1888 message has taught for the last hundred years regarding the human nature of Christ.

Many scholars might be found to support this understanding. Any number of references could be brought which are in harmony with the Scriptures, all confirming the 1888 Adventist teaching that Christ took upon Himself fallen human nature. But these would not

¹¹ Johnson, p. 104, quoting, *The Body*, p. 37.

¹² Johnson, p. 105.

¹³ Johnson, p. 135.

¹⁴ Johnson, p. 138, quoting Antoinette Bourignon, *An Admirable Treatise of Solid Vertue*, p. 80.

¹⁵ Johnson, p. 157, quoting, *The Brazen Serpent*, pp. 43, 44. For a sampling of Erskine's understanding of the gospel see: *True and False Religion*, Hamilton, Adams, and Co., (London, 1874).

suffice in the day of judgment, or settle the conflict that sin has brought to the universe. There is much more to be understood in this end-time.

Chapter Three

WE HAVE CREATED OUR OWN CONFUSION

Seventhday Adventists know well that in the 1950s the Evangelical world came knocking at our door. Their question was (and still is), Is Seventhday Adventism a *cult*?

Our desire to be understood by the popular churches caused us to search for some way to be admitted into their favor. In the light of sacred history there is in our experience a parallel with Peter's denial of Christ.

Peter had sworn allegiance to his Master. He would never be offended even if others were, and with the other disciples he testified he would rather die than deny his Lord (Matthew 26:35). But his desire to be accepted, and his fear of belonging to a "cult" caused him to wither before the critical gaze of a damsel. His public disdain of the truth that he had held for years only increased his anxiety. The stigma of being a "fellow" associated with Jesus was more than he could bear. He would go to any length to be free from it. The charge of the second maid overwhelmed him and he sealed his denial of Christ with an oath. His rejection of truth aggravated his backsliding and confirmed his apostasy.

The charges of two women against this brawny fisherman were sharp. But Peter had to face next a public accusation that the way he talked made it plain he did verily belong to this "cult." And then his conscience snapped. Peer pressure and desire for approbation of the world were his undoing.

Little have Adventists realized the price of worldly acceptance. The danger of compromise will increase as the church faces the pending work of the fourth angel of Revelation 18. Like Peter we can find ourselves denying the true Christ in order to avert the gaze of those who accept the policies of Babylon and array themselves against Him. But there was a cure for Peter's stubborn resistance and there is one for ours. When conviction captured him, he realized that he was a betrayer and a perjurer. He sensed that he needed the truth of the Laodicean message which calls for repentance. Then he "wept bitterly." This was the prelude to the blessings of Pentecost. After Pentecost, Peter went forth boldly preaching repentance to those before whom he had once compromised his faith. Such is the power of repentance, and such is the experience awaiting the church in this crisis hour.

Peter's night of woe was but hours before Calvary. The confusion, vacillation and compromise of the remnant church is now symbolically only "hours" before the close of probation. But those hours must drag on while the close of probation is "on hold." His church, His bride, will continue to spurn His love and remain spellbound with worldly approbation until she sees and "knows" the agony it is causing Him.

The Peter Syndrome Today

The 1950 decade of compromise with the Evangelicals is well known and documentation need not be repeated here.¹ The evidence is clear that significant misrepresentations of Seventhday Adventist teachings were given to the world. Though there are well over a thousand statements from Adventist authors including Ellen White, all of which affirm that Christ took the human nature of man after the Fall, we presumed to tell the Evangelicals the opposite.

It was perfectly legitimate to try to set our beliefs before them in a way that would convince them that we are Christians. But in this dialogue we gave them a distorted view of the third angel's message "in verity." This failure was directly the result of our not knowing or our rejecting the 1888 gospel concepts. These would have enabled us to make clear to them our Adventist doctrines. We should have been able to convince the Evangelicals that we do indeed believe in righteousness by faith, and that the sanctuary message is truly biblical. They would then have understood the significance of our great High Priest's mediation following His sojourn on earth when He took sinful human nature. Our mistake (sin) was unbelief of the "beginning" of the latter rain and loud cry sent to us over a century ago.

The result of our mistake was the publication in 1957 of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*. It became the basis of distorted presentations of our beliefs. This book assumed the place of chart and compass for the next generation of Adventist students in our schools. We now have a corps of ministers around the world whose thinking reflects the erroneous theology of this book.

Since the book went to thousands of scholars of various churches in all lands it became the reference point for Seventhday Adventists so that we might be recognized as members of the Evangelical community, and not a cult. We were elated that we had "arrived." Our elation was based upon the same premise as Peter's denial—desire for approbation.

By the year 1971, another book was published claiming scholarly credentials second to none, perhaps without parallel in denominational history. *Movement of Destiny* was said to have been "commissioned" by a former General Conference president and "approved" by five successive presidents "and many consultants." It "was made possible by the contribution of hundreds of priceless source documents from individual and institutional donors, archivists, librarians, and collectors. ... Doubtless no volume in our history has ever had such magnificent prepublication support."²

Church members could rightfully expect that a book with such a pedigree would be above reproach. The author provides six pages of glowing testimony covering the circumstances that brought the book into print. The reader is assured that the author was charged to "be fair and faithful to fact, comprehensive and impartial in treatment, and to present the full picture in balance,... a true and trustworthy picture, ... faithful and forthright, ... unswerving in fidelity to the full truth. Above all, I must not be unfaithful to God and to the Church."³

What a grand mandate! Frankly, the material presented does not support the premise of the author.

Movement of Destiny uses fragments of sentences coupled with inferences and ignores the paramount treatise by Ellen White on the life of Christ as found in *The Desire of Ages*. Bald statements are made that Christ "was like Adam before the fall" (p. 428) without

¹ For the most extensive work ever produced by a Seventhday Adventist covering the nature of Christ, its history in the denomination and how this teaching was corrupted by fraudulent research methods, see, *The Word Was Made Flesh*, by Ralph Larson, referred to in chapter 2, endnote 3.

² LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, Review & Herald Publishing Association (Washington, D.C. 1971), p. 8.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 1723.

support and in contrast to accurate scholarship. The same tactics are used to support a false interpretation of Adventist history in the 1888 era.⁴

All this is worse than the Peter syndrome. The dear impetuous disciple was caught on the spur of the moment and blurted out his denial to avoid guilt by association. But this book, by *premeditated* design, tries to make the church and the world believe that over the years Ellen White taught that Christ took the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall, and that this is the "true position" of the church.

Repentance Pending

During the last two decades tension in the church has been on the increase. Like a smoldering trash pile, the stifling smoke of increasing doctrinal confusion generated decades ago is about to burst into flame. The smoky odor has become so dense it has been carried to our neighbors and they are asking what is going on. What is the remnant doing to take care of the pending conflagration?

Our "neighbors" are asking questions in public. They want to know what we really believe. Thirty years after the original dialogue about Adventist beliefs, the journal founded by the late Dr. Walter Martin comes to the point without apology:

Because of the controversy that has raged within SDA over the past few decades, many who are aware of the Barnhouse/Martin evaluation in the 1950s have asked if this position should be revised or significantly changed....

It is our position that the evaluation given by Barnhouse and Martin still stands for that segment of Adventism which holds to the position stated in *QOD* [*Questions on Doctrine*], and further expressed in the Evangelical Adventist movement of the last few decades....

Traditional Adventism, on the other hand, which seems to have gained the support of many administrators and leaders ... appears to be moving further away from a number of positions taken in *QOD*. While Adventist officials have stated that the denomination stands by *QOD*, ... some leaders within the denomination have referred to it as "damnable heresy."⁵

It remains to be seen if their appraisal is correct that "many administrators and leaders" [seem to be] "moving further away from a number of positions taken in *QOD*," and how many leaders recognize the "heresy" in the book. As yet no such movement is evident in the church.

This article goes on to say that presently it would appear that "traditional Adventism" is aberrant, confusing or compromising biblical truth. Specifically (1) it indicts our view of justification, that is, what it calls the "aberrant view of equating justification with sanctification," (2) the nature of Christ, and (3) appealing to unbiblical authority, namely Ellen White.

At this point the Peter syndrome is brought into sharp focus and places a serious, veiled threat before us: "It must be stated that if the traditional camp continues in its departure from *QOD*, and in promoting Ellen White as the church's infallible interpreter, then they could one day be fully deserving of the title 'cult,' as some Adventists recognize." Their indictment runs deep, and we are accused of serious theological weaknesses.

They tell us that in the late 1970s we were at the crossroads between "becoming" evangelical or returning to traditionalism of the past. "If those in Adventist leadership ... do not speak up and stand for their convictions, Adventism has little hope, because Traditional

⁴ In 1974, a private study paper of 104 pages was prepared by the author for the General Conference, dealing with the many inaccuracies in *Movement of Destiny*. This was eventually printed under the title, *The Mystery of 1888*.

⁵ *Christian Research Journal*, summer 1988, taken from a seven page article, "From Controversy to Crisis, An Updated Assessment of Seventhday Adventism," by Kenneth R. Samples. The article claims to be "words from a friend, who earnestly prays that the present leaders of SDA will honor Scripture and the gospel of grace above their own denominational distinctives." Here is a clarion call for those "present leaders" to embrace fully the ' truths of the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness.

Adventism is theologically bankrupt." Can it be that the message that has held the Adventist church together for over a century is now worthless, fit only to be traded in on a new model with all the trappings that Babylon can supply? Or unrecognized and unknown to us, do we face a crisis that calls for repentance? They are challenging us to get hold of the *true* gospel which the Lord sent in a "most precious message" to His people in 1888. Failure to embrace this message opens the church to these severe criticisms.

What Is Our Sin?

Adventists who have been church members for a decade or more stand amazed at the difference in the church today from what it was previously. Few would dare to suggest it is in better spiritual condition now than then.

The church around the world is faced with a quantity of private publications produced by an array of what are now called "independent ministries." The question arises, Is all this the fruit of perverseness and unsanctified criticism, or is there a deeper reason, a hunger that has developed because far too little heavenly provender is on the church menu? Whatever the cause, there is a prevailing frustration among leaders and laity.

In an endeavor to bring healing and direction to the denomination, a document, "An Appeal for Church Unity," was prepared in August 1989, by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. This serious tenpage treatise comes to grips with some specific matters facing the church. Reference is made to nearly fifty Scriptures, and numerous quotations are given from the counsels of Ellen White. All this is solid guidance for the church. This Institute has become the heir of the Defense Literature Committee that goes back at least to 1951, when the Barnhouse/Martin era was coming on the scene.

We then had our mandate as a remnant church and we still have the same truth to guard. There is a need for unity in the church and the responsibility of leadership is beyond question. The health of the church is definitely in the hands of those at the head of the work. But when any disease attacks, major or minor, cure can come only when the disease is diagnosed for what it is. The question is, do we know why we are in poor health? In the light of the cosmic battle—do we know our sin?

The Appeal grapples with specifics: (1) Fanaticism, (2) Rejection of basic Christian doctrine, (3) Party spirit, (4) Differing with the position of the church on nonessentials. Growing out of point four, serious cautions are expressed:

While apostasy always takes its toll, one of the heavy pressures on the remnant church today is the divisive effects of some segments of the church who, however, profess dedication to Christ and the finishing of the mission of the church. These members hold certain positions on the human *nature of* Christ, the nature of sin, and the doctrine of righteousness by faith in an endtime setting. Since the Adventist people as a whole do not share these views, the former feel that the church has apostatized from the faith of the pioneers. Some would even suggest that the organized church is no longer fulfilling the role of the remnant church specified in prophecy....

The world church of Seventhday Adventists has agreed on 27 fundamental beliefs, summarizations of basic biblical teachings. ... The specific topics alluded to above are not part of these summarizations. *The world church has never viewed these subjects as* essential to salvation nor to the mission of the remnant church. The Scriptures do not make these subjects central; the data is sparse; and there are sharp differences of view with devoted Christians on both sides.

There can be no strong unity within the world church of God's remnant people so long as segments who hold these views vocalize and agitate them both in North America and in overseas divisions. *These topics need to be laid aside and not urged upon our people as*

necessary issues. We should not let Satan take advantage of God's people at this point and allow such matters to divide us and, consequently, weaken our outreach and fellowship."⁶

This long citation presents matters serious in the extreme. But equally grave is the inference on page 9 that individuals who promote such teachings as these which cause "divisions" within the body will force leadership, as a last resort, to separate them from the church, albeit with love and reluctance.

Notwithstanding the desire for unity in the church, this Appeal presents some insurmountable obstacles. To affirm that the teachings mentioned are not in the 27 beliefs is emphatically not true.⁷ This book, *Seventhday Adventists Believe ...*, A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines, published in 1988 by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference, has become the norm for the church. As the title of the book suggests, it explains the 27 major doctrines of the church. It sets out the ground rules for our common message and common mission. The doctrine that Christ came to earth in the human nature of fallen man is stated a number of times. The chapter, "God the Son," pages 37 to 57, repeatedly makes clear that "likeness" in Romans 8:3 means what it says, not *unlikeness*.

The book in scores of places deals with "righteousness by faith" "in an endtime setting," and assures the church that God's people can obey His law. It is beyond belief that this Appeal can state, "The world church has never viewed these subjects as essential to salvation nor to the mission of the remnant church."

Thus, the confusion in our midst has reached epidemic proportions. To tell the world church that "these topics need to be laid aside and not urged upon our people as necessary issues," is to tell them that the gospel must be "laid aside." To plead for unity in this environment is beyond reason.

Our plight continues to be recognized by the Evangelicals. In *Christianity Today*, the February 5, 1990, issue, a fourpage article tells the world in headlines: "Seventhday Adventists ... are still debating their true identity."

We cannot change the record of our history. It will stand forever. But we can read it for what it says, then repent and confess our error. Our sin is to refuse to see our condition. As long as we individually and corporately decline to face our 1888 history, the Lord's hands are tied. "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41).

The words of Jesus are clear enough—our sin and confusion will remain, until we "see."

⁶ "An Appeal for Church Unity," Biblical Research Institute, August 1989, p. 5, italics supplied.

⁷ See: *Seventh'day Adventists Believe . . .*, A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines, Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventhday Adventists, (Washington, D.C. 1988)

Chapter Four

WHEN WILL WE SEE OUR CONFUSION?

The dialogue that our church leaders conducted with the Evangelicals in the 1950s seems to have a parallel in sacred history that reads like a solemn parable. In the days of King Hezekiah, "princes of Babylon" who were wise in the study of astronomy saw the shadow on the sundial turned back ten degrees. They marveled. The news was soon out that this miracle was the result of King Hezekiah's prayer to the God of Judah for a stay of death. Not only was he healed and promised fifteen additional years of life, heaven confirmed the blessing by a token that astonished the scientists of the day.

The circumstances forced mighty men of the world who knew the movements of the sun to visit this king of tiny Judah who had recovered so miraculously. Ambassadors from Babylon came to King Hezekiah to congratulate him on his recovery and to learn about his God who had performed such a wonder.

Here was an opportunity for the king to tell the notables from Babylon about the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. This would be a test of his gratitude and a display of his appreciation of the truth God gave to His people. The record says: "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31).

Hezekiah was "taken in" by these emissaries. With his heart lifted up in pride, his desire to be accepted in the society of worldly men overcame him. Those who worshiped the sun, moon, and stars, and knew not the true God of heaven, became his confidantes. He was ashamed of the message which God had entrusted to Israel. In his pride he showed them what he thought they wanted to see—the silver and gold and material riches God had placed in the hands of His people. The vast wealth of the sanctuary vessels forged and shaped to minister truth, was degraded to the values of Babylon. The utensils dedicated to the service of the Creator eventually became vessels to hold wine on the tables of Babylon. The value and sustaining power of the oracles of God that had been committed into Israel's hands were depreciated and despised. Such compromise eventually brought destruction and ruin to the sanctuary.

Had Hezekiah improved his opportunity to witness to the power and glory of the truth entrusted to Israel (which was the gospel!), light would have been shed abroad among the heathen. Instead, the concepts of Babylon became the norm for God's people. The evil seed that was sown sprang up later and yielded a harvest of desolation. Hezekiah's sin was to bring wrath upon Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:25).

Our reception of the emissaries from evangelical churches in the 1950s led us to show them things we considered they would appreciate and wanted to see. It was not wrong to "receive" them. What was wrong was that we hid from them the "third angel's message in verity," the "most precious message" which the Lord sent us. We spread before them a confusion of the message God gave to us. To this day we insist we said the right thing. Yet we now have changed what we told them, but again we haven't really changed. Our confusion of face is only multiplied.

Unlike Hezekiah, we have neither repented nor acknowledged our sin. "Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah" (2 Chronicles 32:26). From the king and the leadership of the nation to the lowliest inhabitants in Jerusalem there was

remorse and repentance for the breach of trust. But the evil seed had been sown and in time it would yield a harvest of desolation and woe.

God Had a Plan

The visit of the princes of Babylon to King Hezekiah was not without purpose. The record states plainly that God had a plan; He wanted "to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31). Hezekiah did not know his own heart. If he had died in his sickness instead of having fifteen years added to his life, the sorry experience with the princes of Babylon would never have taken place. Unknown to him there were dark recesses in his mind that needed exposure.

Has the experience of the remnant church with the emissaries of the evangelical world been different? We thought we would make an impression on them. We hoped we would be accepted, or, in the words of *Christianity Today*, be considered "an essentially orthodox Christian body" though a bit unusual. But our Evangelical critics are not satisfied with what happened in the 1950s and they suggest we are now moving in the wrong direction. Likewise many of our membership are not satisfied in the light of what Scripture says. They consider that we are leaving the "landmarks," in fact they are sure of this. What does the record say? Did we fail like Hezekiah and thwart God's plan?

Has Our Identity Been Forfeited?

The Evangelicals have measured carefully the confusion we have brought upon ourselves. They know when and how our problems started. They are acquainted with early Adventist history and how the pioneers studied and went forward with the conviction that they were a "remnant people" with a unique truth. This was no secret when the Evangelicals came to us in the 1950s, but they scorned the idea. They plainly proclaim that we are "experiencing an identity crisis," and that this is in "direct contrast to the confidence of Adventism's pioneers." They would have us and the world to understand—

[Adventists] believed they were God's special movement in Earth's final days. This exalted identity remained intact until Adventism's encounter with evangelicalism in the 1950s.

Much of the doctrinal controversy that has emerged in Adventism in the last several decades can be traced to their interaction with evangelicals in the 1950s. Up to that time, the consensus among evangelical scholars was that Seventhday Adventism was little more than a nonChristian cult. ... *Questions on Doctrine* ... repudiated such commonly held traditional Adventist doctrines as the notion that Christ had inherited a human nature affected by the Fall, and an understanding that the lastday believers would achieve sinless perfection.

There is not a shadow of uncertainty in the words they use to make their appraisal of us. They go even further and suggest that there is a reason for our liberalism that searches for "theological and cultural respectability." They assess our divergence from the past as the fruit of graduate degrees. They explain how this came about. They comment in this journal and tell the world:

In the 1950s and 1960s, many Adventist students began receiving graduate degrees from nonAdventist universities. In many cases, the schools attended by these Adventists were theologically liberal. Thus, Adventist scholars were influenced by modern biblical criticism and liberal theology.

Unfortunately history supports what they say. We have forfeited our identity. We have been robbed of our distinctiveness and seem willing to be merely a church among churches. We have denied our reason to exist, but this is not unique to us. Our spiritual forefathers, the children of Abraham in a former generation, became entangled in the same mistake.

More than half a century ago a bloodson of Abraham, who was a Seventhday Adventist minister, warned the leadership of our church. Elder F. C. Gilbert, in December 1933, published an article in *The Ministry* that has turned out to be a prophecy. His article explained, "Why the Jews Rejected Jesus as the Messiah." His research and account of Hebrew rationalization display an astonishing picture of what has happened to us during the past six decades.

He points out that the world may wonder why the Jewish nation rejected Jesus when the Scriptures are filled with prediction, type, and prophecy regarding His advent. Why did the seed of Abraham, the Sanhedrin refuse the Messiah? In sad detail he explains: "It seems wellnigh inexplicable for some to harmonize the rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees while they were recognized as the leaders who sat in Moses' seat." As he unfolds their history the reasons become clear.

After Alexander the Great worshiped in the temple at Jerusalem, a spirit of friendliness developed between the Greeks and the Jews. "Greece assured the Jews that they desired to be their friends and benefactors. They were desirous of learning more of the God of the Hebrews." And so the Greeks suggested that talented young Jewish men go to Alexandria for training and instruction in the philosophies, sciences and learning of the Greeks. But many elders of Israel feared the results while they counseled against the plan. They cautioned it would be ruinous to the future of the Jewish race. But the advice of Greece prevailed and the stage was set to reject the "son of David, the son of Abraham." The account reads like a sorrowful funeral oration:

Greece assured the fathers in Israel that they might hold to their own standards of religion. ... By receiving recognition from the world's greatest nation, the graduates of Jewish schools would find it greatly to their advantage. ... The men of Israel were made to feel that the advantages to the Jewish scholars would be immeasurable, for they would have incentives, or goals, to reach...

Gradually the Jewish schools came to confer degrees upon their graduates. ... Little by little an educational aristocracy was formed, which was called the Sanhedrin. This term is of Greek origin...

Year by year the word of God was studied less ... culture and philosophy increased. The curriculum ... was influenced toward intellectualism. ... Piety gradually diminished as form and ceremony increased. ... So as the student advanced in years and developed in mental acumen, he studied God's word less, and man's writings more.

The graduate rabbi was known by his garb. It was vital that rabbinical qualifications be met in order for a person to gain a hearing by the children of Abraham. Such were the existing conditions in the land of Judea at the time when John and Jesus appeared in the land of Israel...

By mingling human philosophy with the word of God, the spiritual force and power of the Scriptures was lacking in the lives of teacher and layman. They did not have spiritual discernment. ... The influence of this worldly religious training unfitted all classes to meet Him when "He came unto His own." "His own received Him not." His claims were heavenly; the people were of the earth, earthly. Heaven and earth did not harmonize.

Elder Gilbert could not know that his article was a forecast of our times. He closed his significant review of Jewish history by reporting: "The leaders of Israel had, to a great extent, yielded to the demands of the Greek culture and learning, thereby hoping to gain prestige and influence. They had been led to believe that they could make better progress in their Godgiven task by assimilating worldly standards of education than by clinging with tenacity to the old standards bequeathed to them by their godly ancestors." The world knows the result: They rejected the true Christ when He came!

All this is in the Adventist archives, but the proof of what the Evangelicals say about us can be found easily without research in our current publications. Once we grasp the issues, the quandary we face will be clear. The question is: Who is this "Christ" that all popular Christianity professes to follow? There is only one true Christ portrayed in the Bible although it clearly teaches there is a false christ.

Different dimensions for the "chief corner stone" are impossible. There can be only one foundation for the building erected to be a holy temple unto the Lord, and a habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22). The remnant church cannot build a "holy temple" following more than one architectural plan.

The Building Plan Is Blurred

Sacred history tells us that the early church received the blessing of the Holy Spirit when "they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). This history informs us that the church in the endtime will demonstrate a character and unity that are outstanding. It will be "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ... holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). The members of this last church will speak with one voice, and experience genuine unity. "In their mouth [is] found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Revelation 14:5). There is good reason for our church to inquire why such a standard has not been realized before now. We need to seek this unity as soon as possible.

It was with this goal in mind that we made an attempt for unity early in 1990¹. In several January and February issues of the *Adventist Review*, mentioned in chapter one, a plan was set before the world church in a sixpart series of articles, entitled, "Model or Substitute, Does It Matter How We See Jesus?" The lead article, "Pressing Together," stated the purpose as "a call to unity." But its instructions to the church membership are blurred and leave in question how to achieve this oneness. The dimensions of the "corner stone" are uncertain, so that those who would build in harmony with the "call to unity" are in confusion. They do not know how to go about their assignment. Until we reach a decision about the "corner stone" and know if it is really the one and only, the uncertainty of the "Appeal" document must stand.

This means that church members who "hold certain positions on the human nature of Christ" may be considered "divisive." Consequently "there can be no strong unity within the world church of God's remnant people. ... [Therefore] these topics need to be laid aside and not urged upon our people as necessary issues."² But the condemned "divisive" view is the view expressed in Hebrews 2:17: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren ... to make reconciliation." The only unity possible is that based on Bible truth.

How can the Adventist conscience lay aside the "chief corner stone" and hope to build a glorious church, holy and without blemish? How can church members be silent when the *Adventist Review*, premier press medium of the church, presents one of the most confusing series of articles ever to appear in a denominational publication?

¹ *Christianity Today*, February 5, 1990, p. 19.

² "An Appeal for Church Unity," p. 5

It was represented that these articles were to examine the nature of Christ, but the real issue is sin. What is it, and are perfection of character and sinless living possible? The Augustinian view proclaims that a person is a sinner by nature at birth, already condemned and so commits acts of sin unavoidably and inevitably. It sets the stage for no possibility of sinless living so long as we have this fallen sinful nature, despite many inspired statements to the contrary. This is not the theology of Scripture.

One such beautiful assurance among hundreds that run counter to the theme of the articles, is this one not quoted often:

God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection, and places before us the example of Christ's character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through cooperation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God's assurance to us that we too may obtain complete victory.³

The little word "too" used here carries tremendous weight. It tells us that our victory over sin can be as complete as Christ's victory. Assurance is given in these three sentences that Jesus was tempted, that He resisted the temptation, that He overcame the temptation, and that "we too" may do the same through genuine faith in Him.

Because many Evangelicals have imbibed Augustine's theology, it is impossible for them to agree that Christ took fallen human nature and overcame sin in that nature. But these are the concepts that color the entire series of *Review* articles. Instead of accepting the straightforward counsel of Inspiration, there is confusion about the effects of sin and sin itself. The idea promoted is that sin occurs automatically at birth, rather than when the mind chooses to harbor sinful thoughts. The articles go into involved polemics, and while not accepting the dogma of the "immaculate conception," which obviously is heresy, replace this dogma by a new concept called "miraculous conception." It is true Jesus was miraculously begotten of the Holy Spirit; what is not true is the assumption that His virgin birth gave Him virtually holy flesh, different than our fallen, sinful flesh.

Among the many ambiguous and illogical thoughts presented, this series of six articles tells the Seventhday Adventist church:

1. That Jesus did not experience temptations like ours because His nature was unlike ours [#3, p. 19];
2. That Ellen White "saw Christ's mission in two dimensions. She speaks of a preFall and a postFall dimension" [#3, p. 19];
3. That "Jesus could not experience the inner sinful urgings of sinful humans. But it was necessary that He, .. experience an equivalency in intensity while remaining a sinless human" [#3, p. 21].

The key word is "experience." It is true Christ never "experienced" sin. No Seventhday Adventist who believes the 1888 message of Christ's righteousness has ever implied such in the least. But He did experience our temptations to sin, yet without ever in the least yielding. Through subtle distortion, the articles seek to cast contempt on a truth which the Lord "sent" to Seventhday Adventists.

Adventist church members who appreciate the "most precious message" of 1888 will recognize the confusion promoted in these six articles. Besides the stated irregularities, there is an undercurrent of inference and innuendo to support preFall "exempt" ideas of Jesus' nature. Superficially these may appear harmless, but they were fathered by Augustine and are the essence of the "spirit of antichrist."

³ Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 531.

The Building Material Is Defective

The church that is to be built in the endtime is to stand throughout eternity as a monument to the power of the gospel. It will be that corporate body Abraham could see by faith and is described as "a glorious church ... holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). This can mean only one thing; the material that goes into this structure must be without fault. In the words of Peter, this spiritual house will be built so that the "stone" once rejected would become the "chief corner stone." Other "lively stones" must be joined with it to make a "holy nation, a peculiar people ... called ... out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:59).

This people must "know" the "stone" and being built together with Him must be like Him and see Him as He is at His return (1 John 3:2). They must not be deceived by any counterfeit or false prophet. They must "know" the Spirit of God that confesses that Jesus came "in the flesh," and not be ensnared by the spirit of antichrist that denies He came in the flesh (1 John 4:13).

A grave parable confronts us today. As our spiritual forefathers "disallowed" and cast aside the "chief corner stone," so their house was left unto them "desolate." The foundation which the Lord wanted His people to build upon became the "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (Matthew 23:38; 1 Peter 2:48).

There is no possible way for God's endtime people to be "lively stones" built into a "spiritual house," as long as they try to use two corner stones. The "offense" taken at the biblical account of the Christ who was "made like unto his brethren" continues to be a "stumbling block." Present solemn reality suggests that the ancient rejection of the "chief corner stone" finds a parallel today in the church as many deny that the Word was made "flesh." A correct understanding of the atonement and the worth of the gospel is impossible without comprehending the human nature taken by the true Christ.

The awful truth is that this series of articles in the *Adventist Review* denies that Jesus Christ came "in the flesh." Consider only a few points:

1. To say "His nature was unlike ours" is to contradict the Scriptures that say plainly "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He could not be "tempted like as we are" if His nature was unlike ours.

2. To say that Ellen White "speaks of a preFall and a postFall dimension" of Christ's nature is to put words in her mouth which she never spoke. In 100,000 pages of her writings no such "double talk" can be found and not a whisper of support was offered in the article for the dogmatic statement made.

3. To say that "Jesus could not experience the inner urgings of sinful humans" is to ignore His own testimony. He said: "I can of mine own self do nothing: ... I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.... I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. ... My Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (John 5:30, 31; 6:38; Matthew 26:39, 42). If Jesus did not mean what He said in His battle with His own will, His "inner urgings," then the contest with sin is a sham, a pious hoax. Christ's positive statement, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33) is not a dishonest boast but shows He grappled with "inner urgings" and He overcame. To be tempted "from within" as we are tempted is not a sin.

The plan of salvation had to employ methods connected to reality! This eliminates a Saviour who was exempt from anything. If Christ's victory was because He was separated from us in any way and did not partake fully of human nature, then His experience is one

that we cannot share. His call to us to take up His cross is unfair. His declaration of conflict with His own will is meaningless and deceptive. (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

Because Christ's testimony is irrefutable, a mystical theory is designed called an experience of "equivalency in intensity." This is supposed to absolve Him from "urgings of sinful humans." But temptation in no way implies sinning. Temptation is not sin. The evidence and proof of this is found in Christ's three temptations in the wilderness. The first was from physical hungering. The second was to break His faith and confidence. "Satan flattered himself that he could take advantage of the humanity of Christ to urge him over the line of trust to presumption."⁴ The temptations were severe in the extreme, but clearly Satan failed.

The third temptation would be the most severe and decide the destiny of Satan and determine "who should be victor." "This last temptation was the most alluring of the three. ... The eye of Jesus for a moment rested upon the glory presented before him; but he turned away and refused to look upon the entrancing spectacle. He would not endanger his steadfast integrity by dallying with the tempter."⁵ The whole experience in the wilderness proved that our human nature need not be overcome as Adam's had been. It proved that no matter what the tactics of Satan might be, or which avenue of the soul he might try to use, temptation could not lead to sin if the tempted one refuses to dally with temptation thus choosing not to yield.

By refusing to yield to temptation, Christ sealed the principle of the cross that had been established "from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). As He left His power and glory in heaven and came to this world in the "flesh," He confirmed forever that there is power in the cross for anyone who will take it up as He did. In the cross is found the cure for all egocentric exaltation. The cross provides the reason Jesus could invite His disciples to follow Him. This is the road to victory that He took and that the redeemed will follow here and hereafter (Revelation 14:4).

This road of victory over sin was not traveled by Christ alone. It is the way of the cross which He and His people are to travel together. This is made clear by Paul when he exclaimed: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). His battles are our battles. His victories are our victories. The human will of Christ was tempted by self as we are. The magnitude of this mutual conflict is brought to the church by the Lord in powerful enabling words of encouragement:

When the power of Satan over souls is broken, we see men binding their will to the cross, and crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts. It is indeed a crucifixion of self; for the will is surrendered to Christ. ...

In surrendering the will, the root of the matter is reached. When the will is surrendered, the streams that flow from the fountain will not be bitter, but will be pure as crystal. ...

Jesus Christ is our example in all things. He began life, passed through its experiences, and ended its record, with a sanctified human will. ... He kept His will surrendered and sanctified, He never bent in the slightest degree toward the doing of evil, or manifesting rebellion against God. ...

Those who have a sanctified will, that is in unison with the will of Christ, will day by day have their wills bound to the will of Christ, which will act in blessing others, and react upon themselves with divine power. ...

⁴ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 282; originally from *Review and Herald*, August 18, 1874, p. 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 286; originally from, *Review and Herald*, September 1, 1874, p. 150.

Let us no longer gratify the enemy by complaining of the strength of our evil will; for in so doing we are feeding and encouraging our wills against God, and pleasing the evil one. ...

The human will of Christ would not have led him to the wilderness of temptation, to fast, and to be tempted of the devil. It would not have led him to endure humiliation, scorn, reproach, suffering, and death. His human nature shrank from all these things as decidedly as ours shrinks from them. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself."⁶

With positive counsel of this magnitude, why should anyone suggest that His temptations were not like ours? Why does the human heart want to exile Christ to a different realm of experience that is foreign to humanity? Could this grow out of an unconscious desire to find an excuse for sinning? For the encouragement of the remnant church, this warped understanding of the nature of Christ is not universal.

Not All Adventists Are Confused

Some church members were not willing to accept the defective ideas offered in these articles as the method to build unity. Powerful comments were published opposing the six-article series, as evidenced in "Letters" to the *Review* editor, April 5, 1990. There is no way for readers to know how many letters came in, but of the eight that were published, seven were aghast at the theology presented. Strong reactions were put into words such as these:

"Shades of the new theology! If Jesus' 'nature was unlike ours,' may Heaven have mercy on us, for we are lost. Then Satan's claim would still be true, that man, with his deteriorated, weak sinful nature, could never be an overcomer."

"An excellent attempt to harmonize the errors of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism with biblical truth, but it was just not good enough. I'm sure many will be deceived. ... The 'original sin' dogma and the denial of the real humanity of Christ [were] paraded as the gospel."

"I breathe a sigh of relief that the juries of the land do not share [the author's] theory of inherited guilt! ... He confuses the results of sin with its punishment."

"The statement that 'clearly Jesus did not have a sinful nature' is misleading, if not totally false. ... There are literally hundreds of statements in the writings of Ellen G. White linking Christ with fallen man." "No one would use this text [Romans 8:3] to prove that Christ was unlike men, yet such poor logic has been applied in these articles. Consistency and good logic precludes *likeness* being interpreted in the text as *unlikeness*. ... The author creates confusion."

"[The author] paints a totally unscriptural picture of the nature of man that, in turn, forces him to come up with a Jesus who was not truly human, one who did not truly 'come in the flesh' as the Bible so clearly teaches. According to 1 John 4:13, this is a serious matter indeed."

Evidently letters from readers were numerous enough and had such a tone that they could not be ignored. The *Review* of April 26, printed another seven letters, four strongly opposed to the articles. The objections point out various fallacies presented. Here are some further reactions:

⁶ Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, October 29, 1894

"Try as hard as he might to do otherwise, [the author] painted himself into the same corner as Saint Augustine. . . . [This] position does violence to Scripture and, more important, to the character of God. ... Away with the error of Calvinism, Arminianism, as well as universalism."

"Would somebody please tell [the author] the difference between the character of Christ and the nature of Christ! ... We can have a Saviour born in sinful flesh and yet not have a sinner simply because we don't believe in original sin."

"To make Ellen White say that Christ 'took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature' only at the cross is to grossly distort her understanding of Christ's human nature. [The *Desire of Ages*, page 49 quoted.]"

Because adverse reaction from readers was so emphatic, there was published with the first batch of letters a comment from *Review* editors in the April 5 issue. The notice indicated that a threepart editorial series was already being published "designed to deal specifically with the concerns expressed in the foregoing letters." The series was published in the issues of March 29, April 19, and April 26. Just how this came about is difficult to understand for the previous series had created consternation enough among church members. The new series brought only further confusion. However, no letters of reaction were published later, and subscribers cannot know what the readers said. But the content of the articles is blatant enough.

Was Jesus "like Adam or like us?" The biblical answer was discussed briefly in the first chapter of this book. But the articles further tell us that "the incarnate Christ was neither just like Adam before the Fall, nor just like us. He was unique."

And so He was "unique," but not in the way the articles suggest. With subtle inference Ellen White is made to speak two ways on this subject. Thus the church is told that when theologians talk about "original sin," "some Adventists have denigrated it without careful analysis of its meaning." This suggests that Augustine's teaching can be accepted. The resultant theory is that it is impossible for people in sinful flesh to overcome sin truly. This emphasizes the heresy that Jesus was exempt from the temptations that assail humanity.

This teaching presents the church with a serious problem. Should Augustine's teaching of "original sin" be incorporated into Adventist beliefs because Evangelicals accept it? If not, the "original sin" theory is far more than something that is "not an altogether happy expression." It is *heresy from Babylon*. It sets up a false proposition by confusing the effects of sin with sin itself and thus a chain of erroneous conclusions is the result. The weakest link in this chain proposes that a fallen nature is sin and thus men and women are unable to obey the law.

This demands that Christ came into this world without really being "made like unto his brethren." Whether we call His birth "immaculate" or "miraculous conception," the result is the same. He is thus placed outside the true stream of humanity and cannot be what the Scriptures proclaim: "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). To accept Augustine's proposal is to support the idea given to the church that "Jesus could not experience the inner sinful urgings of sinful humans."⁷ This means the Scripture is incorrect in stating that our High Priest "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).⁸

⁷ Advenrist Review, February 1, 1990, p. 21.

⁸ Serious consideration has not been given to the dilemma that this false theology pushes upon the church. Even unwitting inference that the Bible does not mean what it says is to discount its authority and cancel the plan of salvation. If Jesus did not experience temptations in every way as human beings know them, He was not made "like unto his brethren," as the Scriptures declare plainly. According to the NIV translation, this means there is no atonement for the sins of humanity. It is not angels that need help, but human beings. Accordingly, Hebrews 2:17 is rendered: "He had to be made like his brothers 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." It is mandatory that He be made like His brethren otherwise there is no atonement

It is a theory that logically nullifies the 2300day prophecy and rejects the sanctuary teaching. There is no way for the sanctuary to be cleansed if God's people are doomed to perpetual sinning until the Lord comes. It denies that our "sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). It makes the Day of Atonement a hollow ritual without the practical result of sin being taken outside the camp. It prohibits the Lamb of God from taking away the sin of the world, for if the Saviour does not save from sin, He is not a Saviour and the angel spoke a lie in proclaiming that "he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

The Augustinian view of sin may have a long tradition in Christian history, but it is a teaching that cannot be harmonized with the three angels' messages.



This drama of confusion cannot bring unity. The debate about the nature of Christ, and the growing confusion in our church today will only increase until the 1888 truth is understood correctly. Only wheat is fit for the garner and it is wheat that must be harvested in the end. There is a terrible responsibility resting upon every sabbathkeeper to know that Jesus was "made like unto His brethren" and yet He overcame perfectly, even as He calls us to overcome.

and humanity is left to perish in sin! (Taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION copyright 1973, 1978, by the International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.)

Chapter Five

THE WORD WILL REMOVE OUR CONFUSION

The last book of the Bible begins as "the Revelation of Jesus Christ." "Revelation" means to unveil. The first book of the Bible begins with the promise of a Seed. Both the beginning and the ending of the Scriptures bring to Seventhday Adventists insight and admonition that is imperative. Each presents a picture of conflict, a war that has been in progress for 6000 years and continues to plague the universe. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," suffering in a way that until now only God can comprehend. The entire cosmos is waiting "for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19, 22).

Meanwhile, what is the Seventhday Adventist church doing today that is more knowledgeable and efficacious than it was doing 100 years ago? Do we understand the Day of Atonement more clearly now than did the pioneers of the church?

God's people have been content to consider that the sin problem belongs to Him and sometime He will decide to do something about it. In the meantime we will watch and pray and read the Bible and above all strive to be more like Jesus. We will hope that the Lord gives us a love for people that will lead us to share the good news, and that our hearts will burn with the blessed hope because Jesus is coming soon. And the decades roll on!

The sons and daughters of God will take their rightful place only when they recognize their responsibility in the war between sin and righteousness. Until they do, the promise given to the parents of the human race must remain "on hold."

While we wait, we need to get on with our homework. We have a lesson to learn—that the summation of Jesus' office and work is contained in His statement, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Revelation 1:8). Hidden in this announcement is the plan of salvation. The resolution of this 6000 years of controversy is no less than the revelation or unveiling of Jesus Christ. It is this Word which was "made flesh" that Satan blackmails and slanders before the universe.

But his war against God, with all his subterfuge, will vaporize in the face of this revelation. To unveil Jesus before the universe is to demonstrate the truth of who God is, and to bring to an end the doubt and fear that have given Satan his hold on minds.

The power of this demonstration of Christ's glory is vividly portrayed in the 12th chapter of Revelation. Here is a woman, the church, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (verse 1). These symbols that have reflected the glory of righteousness are the foundation for her feet. She is crowned with the honor of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. She is entrusted with the law and the prophets and the gospel. She is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song of Solomon 6:10); and all this light and truth is for one specific purpose, that she might give birth to "the man child."

The glory, wisdom and truth of all ages is consummated in knowing and in understanding this "man child," Jesus Christ. Satan trembles for fear the church will discover a clear understanding of this "man"—for to know Him is "life eternal," and that means the end of the war. Every conflict in the history of sin is framed against the backdrop of the travail of this woman to give birth to this "revelation."

The original rebellion in the beginning when "his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven" (Revelation 12:4), to the final defeat and destruction of Satan, hinges on the incarnation. The "accuser of our brethren" cannot be "cast down" (verse 10) so long as the character of Christ is unrevealed and misunderstood. The proper understanding of the

Word becoming "flesh" seals the final victory that ends the war against God. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (verse 11)—physical death *and* death to "self." The testimony that constitutes their victory is said to be theirs, but it is more. The declaration of their experience of overcoming by the blood of the Lamb is none other than the "testimony of Jesus" who stands with His people (verse 17).

Verse 17, (frequently connected with Revelation 19:10, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy") supplies authority and support for the writings of the Lord's messenger, Ellen White. As true and supportive as this has been, much more is involved than the validity of her writings. This verse forecasts the day when our own testimony and experience will be directly connected to the experience of Christ as the "Son of man." This experience will be the culmination of all prophetic utterance.

This is the reason why the woman stands on the moon. The light and glory that has emanated from the past is only a reflected image of the final revelation that clothes this woman with the sun. When she understands the revelation of the Word in the "flesh," born of her flesh, she will overcome as He overcame. The "remnant of her seed" will be one with the "Seed" and bear the same testimony, the "testimony of Jesus."

Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This "Seed" must confront the serpent in a crucial battle. Faith in this promise of Genesis 3:15 has secured the salvation of all who will enter heaven's portals. Here at the outset of human history faith was established in the Seed of the woman that must carry God's people through to the kingdom. This faith must bring divinity and humanity together in a union sufficiently strong to win the battle. Since this promise was based upon a "Seed," the war and the outcome of that war must be in the context of human intelligence. The human race knows of only one kind of "seed." And it was in this fashion that "God sent forth His Son" into this world, "made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

This truth is magnified in the "book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). His genealogy is loaded (as is ours) with perverse characters and the catalog of their sins, which leaves nothing to the imagination. In it there are liars, cheaters, deceivers, adulterers, harlots, and offspring by incest, with apostates worse than the heathen surrounding Israel. This was the royal line of Jesus' genetic inheritance, a gallery of rogues with not one Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Daniel in the list.

Through the centuries Satan searched the psyche of these vagabonds in Christ's lineage to build up a strategy that he expected would be invincible. This caused him to boast that he would overcome Christ when He took fallen human nature. He laid plans to seduce Jesus as he had His forebears. He planned to pull down the Son of God from His exalted position.

The Father did not yield up His Son without anguish—"it was even a struggle with the God of heaven." Why should He allow His Son to take "man's fallen nature" and become forever a member of the human race, the Seed of the woman, a child of a created being? The God of heaven had to decide if He would take up His cross and give his beloved Son to die for us, or "whether to let guilty man perish."¹

It was all or nothing: become the Seed of the woman or stay in heaven!

Revelation 3:21

¹ See: Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, pp. 25-27.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

The promise in the end of the Scriptures is the culmination of faith and finds expression in this Seed, this gift of God to the whole world. In this assurance, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame," a common victory is made evident. Christ, and each person who stands with Him and takes up His cross, will face temptation and trial, but each will conquer. The Seed given to the world had to travel the highway of humanity and grow to maturity. Eventually it must be proclaimed that the battle has been won, the enemy has been overcome. The Seed must then sit on His throne because He "overcame." The battle that sinful human nature had fought for supremacy was lost; "self" was crucified. The Seed conquered in this war, and bruised the head of the serpent.

But there are others of the royal family who, if they overcame like He overcame, must sit with Him on His throne. This promise, enshrined in the most solemn decree in all Scripture, is a vital part of the message to Laodicea. But the thrust of this warning is blunted because of our misconception of truth. Little have we realized the price of our compromised position expressed to the Evangelicals. How can we overcome as Christ did if He was "exempt" from our weaknesses and liabilities, and took a nature unlike ours and thus evaded our problem? Something will have to give. Either Moses did not know what he was recording in Genesis or John was confused when he wrote Revelation. But even more serious, did the True Witness say something He did not mean?

We must believe Jesus was the Seed of the woman. It was this Seed, the Word that was "made flesh." This was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). When this Word became "flesh" and dwelt among us there was no magic change in the Seed, or "exemption" from becoming other than a genuine member of the human family subject to all the trials and temptations of the human family.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1, 2).

What He was, we are called to be. The promise is, "we shall be like him," and if we are to be like Him, He must be made like us.

John 3:16

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The best known verse in the Bible may be the verse least accepted for what it says. What did God *give*? He "gave his only begotten son" to the world. If Jesus did not truly become the Seed of the woman, what did God *give*? If He did not become our "flesh," what did God *give*? If He came into the stream of humanity for a little space of time only, what did God *give*? If He was "exempt" from anything, what did God *give*? Unless He took human nature, to be a member of the human race with all its liabilities, what did God *give*?

Jesus confirmed that the *gift* was for real. He had become a member of the human race. He even made the astonishing statement that the Son of man did not know when the second coming would take place, only the Father knew this (Mark 13:32).

When we are assured that He was the "only begotten," we must believe that there was nothing else that could be given. Like Abraham when told, "Take now thy son, thine only son" for a burnt offering, God held nothing back. As Abraham's faith urged him on to fulfill

all righteousness, so God proved that He held nothing back, but "gave" His Son as an offering.

Adam's aspiration to be "as God" implied a denial that he was made in God's image. God could have created another man, but this would have been admission of failure. Instead, He waited 4000 years for sin to develop and then "gave" His Son to be "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). When the race had suffered all the deformities of four millenniums pressing down upon it with all the liabilities inherent in degenerate humanity, *then* Jesus became "flesh" and took these infirmities upon Himself. In this way the gift of God is really a gift. The Seed took human nature for eternity, never to return to the same place He held before the incarnation.

This is the gift that holds the universe in awe. It is the seal of the promise that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. ... Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:11, 14). And how could the Scriptures be more emphatic? "He also," "he ... himself," "he ... likewise" took the flesh and blood of His brethren. This truth confirms forever that God "gave" without reservation, knowing He would have less afterward than before; but in this grand gift He proved His love. In some inscrutable way the redeemed will help fill this void made by the gift of the only Begotten.

But wonder of wonders, the God of heaven not only gave the Seed, the Word, the Lamb, He gave *Himself* to the human family. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). His gift was an active gift. Moment by moment He has bound Himself to us. This is plainly shown by the fact that the incarnation existed in principle from the foundation of the world. The foundation of the world was laid after the inception of sin. Sin brought God into a new situation. Eternity was disrupted and time became a fact; death loomed imminent. At this point the Seed, the Word, the Lamb, became also the Alpha.

This "Alpha" provided the universe with a new and superior revelation of God. He is the One who "was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). It was God that "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21). As alpha is the first letter of the alphabet so the last letter must come, and Jesus is that ultimate, the Omega. The Alpha opened the door to salvation and as the Omega He will close the door to sin when the serpent's head is finally crushed.

This was God's plan. He "gave" the Alpha to us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This righteousness is the spoils of battle with sin, for righteousness implies a conflict with evil, and victory in that conflict. The whole plan of salvation was not to save people possessed of Adam's nature before the Fall, but sinners like Adam and his "children" became after the Fall. This situation demanded a Saviour who should come on the same level as those to be saved. The only way this could be done was to place the Seed in the stream of humanity, "made like unto His brethren" and prove Satan's charges to be false.

Since the coming of sin and evil to this planet was an intrusion from beyond, the controversy began before this world was created. The salvation of the children of Adam is a secondary matter in this cosmic conflict between Satan and Christ. The battle then—and the battle now—is summarized in the final message to the world. That "loud voice" proclaims that the "everlasting gospel" is to bring to the Creator supreme honor and glory in His most trying, final hour when *His judgment* is pending before the universe (Revelation 14:6, 7). The ultimate purpose of the gospel is to resolve this great controversy and eradicate sin from the universe.

At the beginning of the conflict, when the prince of the heavenly host brought his charges against God, he campaigned among sinless beings. The angels who remained loyal

retained their faith in the Creator and overcame temptation by choice, having sinless natures. Sinless nature does not need a Christ to take an unfallen nature for their salvation. Unfallen beings are not lost.

The angels who by choice fell, possessed no "genetic" connection with sin. They inherited nothing. They had no "propensity" to evil. There was no "original sin" among them. They sinned and fell by choice and choice alone. Sin became a fact in a perfect environment when sinless angels agreed to worship "self" and set out on a path that would lead to the murder of the Son of God. This virus of rebellion was passed from mind to mind without inheritance or a physical act of any description.

In a similar way sin took root on planet earth. In a perfect environment sinless Eve renounced her faith in the Creator and accepted counsel from the serpent and chose to rebel and worship "self." Adam, with his eyes open, chose to cast his lot with Eve and neither of them had a "propensity" to sin. But having made their choice to rebel they were subject to death. It was in this arena that Christ overcame in human nature. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). He took up His cross and accepted His calling to be the Omega.

Just how firmly Christ was joined to Adam's posterity as He took human nature is emphasized scores of times by the Saviour. Almost always He called Himself the "Son of man." He seemed to delight in His connection with sinners. But sinners have an ego loathe to accept a Saviour too close to the human family. We would prefer a superman enshrined in mystery and miracles, "exempt" from commonclay human problems. The carnal heart revels in fantasy and delights to make provision for sin. Is this attitude the fruit of an unconscious desire to excuse evil?



When the truth of John 3:16 is appreciated by sabbathkeepers, there will be no fear to talk about the human nature of Christ. This truth will become the theme and wonder of God's people. Urged on in their glorious study of His purposes they will be brought into a unity of love and appreciation of the plan of salvation that is now but dimly understood.

Our immature understanding of the incarnation can be compared to an acorn on the ground under an oak tree. For someone who had not seen a gigantic oak, it would be very difficult to understand an explanation that would adequately describe how the tree is hidden in an acorn. The two are different, but they are the same. The one foreshadows the other. The tree can only come from the acorn. To a child this presents a wonder. How can a giant tree be held in the hand? To an adult this is pure logic, absolute truth.

For too long Christians have not dug deep enough to plant the acorn of their faith so that it may germinate. The vast difference between the towering oak and the acorn seems obvious, but the real issue is whether we will argue about the differences or see the potential. Our dim perception is like that of Philip when he said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father," and Jesus could only answer in sorrow, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me" (John 14:8, 9)? It is impossible for the Lord to return until there is a people who "know" Him!

Sin must continue as long as His people are willing to continue in sin in the shade of Christ's righteousness, assuming that His substitution for our continual sinning will suffice in the war against sin. Such substitution blinds us and interposes itself between us and victory over sin. It is content to let Jesus bear the cross alone, and ignore His invitation to come after Him in a mutual crossbearing. It can profess great sympathy for His suffering but in reality be a covering for an inward glee that He was punished and we escaped. Such an idea of substitution is nurtured by selflove.

Selflove, selfishness, the essence of sin, cannot exist without a host. It is a parasite that either kills the host or is killed when sin is blotted out of the host. In the final conflict between truth and error, substitution serves as a sedative to shield and numb the host so the parasite of sin continues to flourish. Mature spiritual health and the disease of sin are mutually exclusive; one or the other dies.

God is working to remove childish ideas held by His remnant people. All heaven is interested in Laodicea's coming to "know" her condition. God has promised to remove all confusion from the midst of His people. If they will but "repent," they will move forward into that light that lightens the whole world (Revelation 18:13). As yet, the man of sin has not been exposed in our own ranks (in our own hearts). We remain in the darkness of immaturity.

This final generation has more to learn than any previous people. Our love and appreciation of the Christ who took upon Himself human nature must exceed that of all past ages. This esteem will be the ultimate of human capacity in this world, and this people will "know" God! They will be the living in faith in contrast to those who "died in faith." They will make it possible for all the worthies, the prophets, and the martyrs from Abel to this day, to be made perfect through faith. The record gives assurance: "They without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:140).

This process of learning will be like the chaste courtship of two lovers who increasingly appreciate the beauty, the integrity, and nobility of each other's character. They do not "strive" to love each other. Their dedication is mutual and absolute; their marriage is pending and certain, and everyone sees and knows of their mutual dedication. The world stands charmed at their commitment to one another. So also is the ultimate union of God's people and Christ.

There can be no confusion about this.

Chapter Six

TRUTH KNOWS NO CONFUSION

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

The manifestation of God in human flesh was intimated to Adam and Eve in the Garden after the Fall. The development of that promise is a history of faith manifested in human hearts, beginning with the mother of the human race. If only her child could be that Messiah!

But there were to be millenniums of schooling before the Seed of the woman would be manifest in the flesh. The human race had to learn that the battle between truth and error was real, and although the sting of death is sin, the faith of God is stronger than the grave. The children of Adam would begin to know the anguish and pain that sin had caused God from its inception.

The only liability truth must meet is mankind's immaturity. Just as children are easily deceived, so also Satan can confuse and befuddle immature adults. It is therefore both a plea and a confident hope that Paul expresses:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.... Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:1, 13-15).

The seed of truth contained in the promise given in Eden must be allowed to germinate and grow to maturity. The plan of salvation is the history of this growth from seed to harvest. When the promise was given to the mother of mankind, there was in it an intimation of God becoming human flesh. The appreciation of that promise must grow and develop until God's people reach a unity of faith and knowledge of the Son that measures with the stature of Christ. This growth involves the painful development of faith and spiritual vision. Because this experience has been developing for 6000 years, we may know the magnitude of the ordeal. It has not been God's unwillingness to dispense faith that makes the process so long, but the nature of our blindness that fails to comprehend it.

When Adam sinned, a crisis followed. "Our God is a consuming fire" and sin is very combustible (Hebrews 12:29). It cannot stand in His presence. Of the wicked it is written, "the Lord shall consume [the wicked] with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy [them] with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). This brightness and glory which judges and destroys is the power of righteousness and truth itself. In other words, the essence of God's own character ignites sin. This is not because of anger or retaliation on His part, but the result of spiritual law; sin cannot abide in His presence.

This placed God at a disadvantage in His dealing with Adam. How could He make His righteousness known to fallen man? How could He teach him and reclaim him, without consuming him? The very thing most needed was that which would destroy.

A beginning had to be made to put the truth of righteousness back into the hands of man and veil its glory to fit his ability to endure and receive it. This was initiated by using symbols and types and shadows. Adam and Eve, without realizing it, faced their first lesson when God supplied them with skins for clothing; sin caused death. From this first kindergarten lesson the children of men had to go on to the majestic sanctuary service with all its glorious implications. The tabernacle, the priesthood, and every part of the solemn service was to point to the cross on Calvary when the true Lamb would offer His own blood.

The result of His sacrifice would be manifest in the final atonement when the sanctuary is cleansed and sin is blotted out. This plan of salvation would be like a seed planted to grow in the history and development of truth, from symbol to symbol. The time must come when man could again commune with God face to face.

Although the second coming of Christ is referred to often in Adventist conversation, little do we realize what is involved and the crisis that is pending. Each time the remnant is confronted with the pure truth of the atonement, the heat of this glory, the glory of the cross, seems more than we can bear. The natural heart seeks a detour around the cross which demands that "self" must die. But from eternity the Almighty has understood that this is the only way for life to continue. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (John 12:24). The supreme manifestation of this principle in God's existence was made plain when He faced the cross and agreed to give the only Begotten to become "flesh" as a member of the human race. Thus it was at the cross that the veil between man and God was rent and His character was seen in all its glory. It is in the light of this glory that we see the Word made "flesh."

But we are loathe to receive this truth and our childish faith is content to accept a Saviour who came only part way to meet man's needs. We say He was *different*. The glory of His manifestation in the "flesh" overwhelms us, and the battle between faith and sin continues. So the advent must be delayed until we learn in the school of Christ the sinfulness of sin. God cannot set up a lie.

One notable student in this school of revelation was Abraham. His ordeal is a parable to help mortals see that God is real and that He appreciates and experiences the very emotions His children pass through as they face the horrors of sin and death. The parallel is so close that the name of Abraham and the name of Messiah would be set in the same context: "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

Any student in the school of Christ who accepts the Seed as the Master Teacher is related to Abraham, or he is not really an heir of the promise. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ... If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:7, 29). True Israelites are those who understand the potential of the dynamics hidden in the promise:

They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Romans 9:6-8).

What is there in the experience of Abraham that so closely reflects the glory of the Son of man that only those who enter into a similar experience are counted heirs of the promise? Many aspects of Abraham's life reflect the pattern of sacrificial commitment displayed by the Seed. He left those closest to him and the security of his homeland; he moved into enemy territory as a stranger; he exhibited a generosity and loyalty to Lot and his family beyond the accepted norm; he displayed a faith in God's word that carried him through to realize all that had been promised. These similarities and many others clearly reflect the nature of the Saviour.

In Abraham's experience there is one act which overshadows all others. His supreme expression of faith, that unveils the essence of Christ's mission, was bound up with his only son upon an altar of rock and wood at Mount Moriah. In the drama of salvation, the very place where Abraham was called to offer Isaac exhibits a profound meaning. Moriah in the Hebrew is the conjunction of "Yah" or Lord Jehovah, with "*ra'ah*" which means to see or experience, to perceive or regard. This dark tunnel of tribulation through which Abraham had to pass was eventually to culminate in a sacrifice on a hill that included all this hidden in its name.

In other words, the place of his supreme act of faith is named the place where God is perceived and revealed. It was not a vision. It was a promise in visible form, a demonstration of faith as real as life itself. And this ultimate reality of faith shows not only the believer's union with God, but the character of God Himself as He agreed to offer His Son to become a part of the human family.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). This is the assurance that faith brings into existence that which is the basis for hope. This is why the faith of Jesus was, and is, a complete demonstration of God the Father. This demonstration is the fruit of the knowledge of God and Christ, which knowledge is life eternal. All the promises of God find their fulfillment in Christ as He became a member of the human family. Thus perfect faith completely reveals the God who made the promises (Romans 4:13). "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and

we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

For the Word to be made flesh meant to make the promises of God evident in the Seed. Genuine faith must produce tangible evidence. The incarnation of Christ was the manifestation of the faith of God that fulfilled all His promises and gave the universe a new understanding of His character. This was evidence never seen before. We therefore stand in awe at Jesus' words and haltingly accept them: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Abraham Is Our Father In Faith

Who is willing to part with an only child? But even more difficult, who would part with a child who is the answer to prayer, the fruit of a miracle? But for Abraham, there was much more pending than the loss of family and heir. Offering his only son Isaac demonstrated faith in its purest form. In this we are confronted with the truth of his whole experience, for it portrays Christ's humanity and our relation to it and our understanding of it.

His crisis of faith involved his entire life history. Isaac represented far more than the guarantee of Abraham's family tree. The salvation of the world was pending in the fulfillment of God's promise "in Isaac." Isaac was the visible evidence of faith rewarded after decades of distress. Time had not lessened the intensity of Abraham's mental turmoil. The promised land of Canaan was never realized by this weary sojourner. Hostile neighbors kept him adrift without security or any real possession. Frustration had been his lot for years and the gift of a family eluded him and Sarah. What hope was there that he or the promised seed would ever reach Canaan? Then came Isaac.

When all hope had nearly vanished, God did the impossible and parted the symbolic "Red Sea" for the patriarch and his wife. The miracle son was born. Abraham through faith now knew the reality of God's faithfulness. The substance was held in his own arms. This seed was irrefutable evidence. Isaac was the gift of salvation itself, and for Abraham the desert was now in blossom. God had finally honored and accepted this man who hung on by faith. The domestic problem of two wives was settled. A well was dug and ownership sealed. A grove was planted, his travels were over and he stayed in the land of the Philistines for decades. And then he was struck as if by a bolt of lightning.

Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:2). To take Isaac away was to annihilate faith itself. This was a reversal, a revoking of the promise, a cancellation of his whole life's experiences. Perplexity, doubt, frustration flooded the soul of this old man whose every hope centered in this child of promise. A terrible shaking commenced in the heart of Abraham. He entered a time of trouble such as he had never seen. Despair rolled in like a flood. Had God forsaken him?

And so he reviews his life. He sees little good. There was vacillation; there were lies to Pharaoh; there was the faithless and illicit affair with Hagar and the resultant bond-son Ishmael. Had his faithlessness brought this judgment? What else could this be but a "judgment"? Death itself would be a welcome retreat from this horrible abyss of shattered hope, yet God was still leading.

An ember of faith still burned. He would cling to the promise in spite of the overwhelming sense of being forsaken. God must be faithful. If He demanded Isaac's life, He could and would resurrect him, for mercy and justice would meet in God's dealings with man.

In the wake of this heart-rending travail was born one of the most vivid and profound revelations of God's own passionate struggle in the sacrifice of His Son. How could He give

Him to become flesh and blood and take on human nature and become a member of the rebel race?

Abraham's faith was like a key that opens a door to reveal the glory of heaven itself. This glory evidenced through the faith of the aged saint is the true consummation of the promised Seed. Isaac, as it were, was resurrected in a revelatory message of God's own struggle. This is why the promise revolves around Abraham and Christ, who are partners in disclosing the wonders of the plan of salvation.

It was Abraham who penetrated the faith of Jesus. That penetration could only emerge because of following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. It was on the cross that Jesus fully bore the doubt of humanity and triumphed over it through faith. Throughout His life He bore the cross daily; Calvary epitomized the struggle. This is the faith that demonstrates and reveals God in the "flesh." As surely as every step in the experience of Abraham was real, so Christ, the seed of Abraham, really became a member of the human family. He took human nature upon Him in a post-Fall dimension without exemption and faced temptations like Abraham had and as we know them today.

This experience for Abraham was like passing through the valley of the shadow of death. He was sorely tempted to turn his back on God's promises and cling to his "flesh" in Isaac. So Christ had to choose between His will, the clamors of His "flesh," or face the cross and drink the cup. In each case the salvation of the world was in the balance; all depended upon faith.

Without understanding the liabilities that Christ assumed in taking sinful human nature, we lack the last essential building-block in construction of the temple of truth. We will never be equipped with the "faith of Jesus" until we understand the ground over which His faith passed. To "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," we must know Him as one "made like unto His brethren." Then we will see clearly that He is "a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh." This will provide "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:20, 19).

Therefore we are Christ's, we are Abraham's seed, we are heirs according to the promise. The world waited 4000 years and then God sent forth His Son, the gift as promised, "made of a woman, made under the law." All this that we might be sons and not slaves, heirs of God through Christ the Seed of Abraham. In this truth there is no confusion. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. ... Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ... Ye cannot do the [sinful] things that ye would" (Galatians 5:1, 16, 17).

"My God and Your God"

As mentioned, Jesus habitually called Himself the "Son of man." The implications of this are immense and need to be better understood. Was He telling the world that He had a special family connection with mankind? The truth of this may be seen as He talked with Mary after the resurrection.

He had finished His earthly ministry. He had done all that He could do before returning to heaven. Would His walk in the flesh with the children of men fulfill the law? Had He been the second Adam in reality, and conquered where the first Adam had failed? How could He know? According to what He said to Mary the confirmation remained to be seen. Mary stood at the tomb weeping, in total despair. She seems not to sense that messengers from heaven are talking with her when they ask, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Without looking up to sense what was going on she answers, "Because they have taken away my Lord." Then, with tears blinding her eyes, she hears the same question from Jesus Himself, "Why weepest thou?" Thinking it was the voice of the gardener, she remains in anguish and asks where Jesus has been taken.

It was then that Jesus said, "Mary," and it was then that she was resurrected from her grave of grief. She recognized Jesus and answered, "Master." There He was, real and living, standing before her. He was about to make a startling statement. He would confirm how He had joined Himself to the children of Adam without a shadow of exemption, truly the Seed of the woman. With a note of suspense and profound anticipation Jesus tells Mary: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17).

Almost an unfathomable statement! Here was the One who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a slave, made in the same fashion as men. Here He was proclaiming to the world that there was news for His "*brethren*" that they must understand. The news was, He was going back to His Father, the *same* Father that they had. He was going back to His God, the same God they had, and He wanted His "brethren" to know that He was one with them. He had broken down the wall of partition between man and God and they were nigh unto Him, no longer "far off." He confirmed that He was the son of Adam, which was the son of God and that Jesus Himself was the Seed in that royal lineage (Luke 3:23-38). His blood had sealed His kinship with the children of men for He had abolished in His "flesh" the enmity of man toward God (Ephesians 2:13-16).

But when Mary told His "brethren" these things, they "believed not" (Mark 16:10, 11). The question comes to us: Do His brethren in the end-time, when the mystery of God is to be finished, have any more faith than the disciples had, and do they really believe what He said?

"I Say Unto You ..."

When Jesus was brought to trial, He let the world know that He was "made like unto his brethren." The case against Him was going badly. The authorities knew what they wanted to do but they could find no witnesses. How can they put a man to death without witnesses? There was no agreement even among the bribed witnesses. Finally two were found with a story that might influence the court.

The account as given in the Greek is dramatic! "This man said, 'I can destroy the shrine of God and through three days build it again.'" But the Accused remained silent. He knew He had never said such a thing. What He had said was like a parable which even His disciples did not understand until after the resurrection. "He spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:21, 22).

But for now in this trial, Peter is in the courtyard experiencing his time of trouble. When he comes to his senses he rushes out in bitter repentance. How could his deceptive heart have been so completely unknown to himself?

Meanwhile the court is becoming tense. After they finally find two witnesses the Accused refuses to defend Himself. The prosecutor is embarrassed and frustrated and as a last resort calls upon the God of the universe to bring this trial to a verdict by demanding the Accused to speak. The words are piercing: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." The court waits in solemn suspense to hear what this "man of Galilee" will answer (Matthew 26:63).

Silence could reign no longer. The Accused must bear witness but what He says they hear only to condemn. Today the question is, Do we hear what He really said? In His reply may be found an idiomatic way of saying "Yes," but in His reply there is also a profound latent ambiguity. To the question of the high priest, "Are you the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus answers: Those are your words, Caiaphas, that is what you say, but I tell you now, you will see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. The judge seizes these words of the Accused, and decrees there is no need of further witnesses, He is worthy of death. By His own testimony He must be condemned.

What does the Accused say? When the high priest tries to put words into His mouth, Jesus proclaims that He is the "Son of man." He belongs to the human race, a child of Adam, the son of David. He declared before the universe that at His second coming He would return as the "Son of man." He comes sitting on the right hand of power and He is there because He "overcame." This was a prelude to what He told Mary, "My God and your God," for He sits down with the "Father in his throne" after He "overcame." We too may sit on that throne as we overcome by the faith of Jesus (Matthew 26:57-66; Revelation 3:21).

Luke reiterates the account (Luke 22:66-71). The "chief priests and the scribes" as a group were seething with the question, "Art thou the Christ? tell us." He was in a no-win situation. If He told them they would not believe, and if He asked them they would not answer, but they could know this: "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." With bated breath they all joined in a direct question, "Art thou then the Son of God"? He answered them,

You say that I am," these are your words, and on these words He was condemned. His positive proclamation was, He was the Son of man, and He never seemed to tire of declaring this.

"Son of Man"

This was the title that Jesus used scores of times when He referred to Himself.¹ The way that He used this title has deep implications which show that it was far more than just a name, a handy appellation. It describes a condition, a heritage that provided a badge of nobility and authority. Clearly the second Adam respected His place in the grand plan of creation, while the first Adam despised his delegated office and was willing to cast it aside, coveting the throne of God. In contrast, Jesus was not concerned with grasping the place He had as God. He was willing to lose His reputation, take the form of a servant, and be "made in the likeness of men," suffering the wages of sin without ever becoming a partaker of sin (Philippians 2:7, 8).

It is this very quality of being the "Son of man" that gives Christ credibility before the universe. The common pagan idea of God would allow Him to do whatever He pleased because He is God. The true Christ was constrained to help man in his post-Fall condition when the easy solution would have been to write him off as beyond repair. Obviously there was no need to help Adam in his pre-Fall condition. He didn't need a Saviour. It was in this

¹ This title, "Son of man," was Christ's favorite designation for Himself and it appears in the Gospels some 80 times. The *SDA Bible Commentary* makes reference to this use in several places. Two meaningful examples follow: "The Hebrew has several words for man: (1) *'ish* which refers to man as a male or husband; (2) *'enosh*, which is a more general term, seldom used in the singular, more usually collective for the whole human race. It seems to comprehend man in his frailty, disease, and mortality. Jesus, who took upon Himself not the nature of angels, but of the human race after four thousand years of sin had left their stamp of degeneracy, is prophetically designated 'Son of *'enash* (Dan. 7:13); *'enash* is the Aramaic form of *'enosh*); (3) *'adam*, which describes man in a generic sense. God said 'Let us make *'adam* in our image' (Gen. 1:26). Our English word 'mankind' in many instances suitably translates *'adam*."

The LXX has, ... literally, 'like a son of man.' ... [T]he Aramaic is full of meaning. Along with other ancient languages, the Aramaic omits the article when the primary stress is upon quality, and uses it when the stress is on identity. ... In harmony with this rule the Son of God is introduced literally as 'One, of human form.' ... In the NT the expression 'Son of man' which most commentators agree is based on [Daniel] ch. 7:13, occurs almost invariably with the article. ... God chose to present His Son in prophetic vision with special emphasis on His humanity. ... Thus, repentant sinners have as their representative before the Father 'one like' themselves, One who was in all points tempted like as they are and who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities (Heb. 4:15). Comforting thought!"—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 580, 829.

In view of Jesus making reference to the book of Daniel (Matthew 24:15), it is reasonable to believe that He knew full well the meaning of "Son of *enosh*." when referring to Himself.

environment that God sensed that He needed to do something drastic, beyond the ken of mortals, and so "gave" the balm of Gilead to cure the disease of sin.

Jesus referred to His Father as "working" and setting an example so that He also had to work (John 5:17). He tried to explain this to the Jews when on the Sabbath He healed the infirm man who had been smitten for thirty-eight years. This was more than they could endure and they "sought to slay him." When He said He had to work because His Father worked, their zeal to kill Him was intensified. Breaking the Sabbath by healing was bad enough, but claiming "that God was his Father" was intolerable. But Jesus was not dismayed by their disdain. On the contrary, He proclaimed that all He was doing was the result of seeing what His Father did. He Himself could "do nothing." In the end, at the final showdown, He would have "authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (verses 19-30). The Seed of Abraham, by hand-to-hand conflict with sin, would understand what was involved in the judgment. By not seeking His own will He would render a judgment that was just.

Only the Son of man could do this for only the Son of man truly believed what Moses and the prophets had written about Him.

To call Himself the "Son of man" was not just the temporary title to assume for a while on earth. It has eternal significance. John the Revelator stood ready to write when he received his message for the seven churches. The Alpha and the Omega, "the Almighty," was declaring His purposes and the prophet listened. There is an amazing family kinship disclosed as the prophet acknowledges his assignment. He ' responds: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," was ready to write in a book what the Spirit spoke (Revelation 1:4-9). John, serving as a prophet, presumed to say that he was a "brother" of the Alpha and Omega. This he could say because the "first and the last," the Son of man, became a member of the human family.

As he began to write of the glories revealed to him, he was ushered into the place of the "seven golden candlesticks." This was the tabernacle of the very presence of the Creator. In the midst of the seven candlesticks was "one like unto the Son of man" whom John recognized in all His glory and sacred attire. Here in the midst of heaven was the "Son of man," and here was the One John could call "brother."

When he would have been overcome with the glory John fell at His feet, but the "Son of man" said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (verses 17, 18). Here was the Seed, born of a woman, born under the law, the Son of man, "dead" but "alive for evermore," who would say to His "brother," "Don't be afraid." What more could the Majesty of heaven do to show sympathy and love for Adam's kin? The encouragement that John received is for us today.

When John finished recording the most fearful proclamation in all history (the message of the three angels), he was given further insight into the future. In vision he saw a white cloud and "upon the cloud sat one like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" (Revelation 14:14). Here the second advent was portrayed. Ready for His triumphal return, the "Son of man" would come back still a member of the human family (22:16). The "root and offspring of David" would thrust in His sickle, for "the harvest of the earth is ripe."

John saw the true Christ. This was the One he could call "brother." This is the Mediator between God and man. The Greek in 1 Timothy 2:5 tells us that He is Christ Jesus, *a man*. We have the assurance that our Advocate understands fully our temptations. In the great pending trial of all ages, the children of Adam have an Advocate, a man to mediate, "the man Christ Jesus."

"Sons of God"

The immeasurable wonder of Christ becoming the "Son of man" stands beside another equally amazing truth. Sinners are to be called "sons of God." This is but the other side of the same coin.

John tells the church it can know anyone who has the spirit of antichrist because such will not confess that Jesus Christ came "in the flesh." By contrast, the church will know that the Spirit of God is in those who confess "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." This same author assures the church that the children of men are called to be members of the heavenly family. His record is:

ehold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1, 2).

Jesus was the Son of man, and the Son of God. Wonder of wonders, God's children will partake of the same relation to Him. Human beings, belong to the heavenly royal household. Paul says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.... The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17). To suffer with Him is to see sin for what it is. Could the apathy of the church be the result of blindness, not believing that we have this high calling? Consider: "children of God," "sons of God," "joint-heirs with Christ"! How much closer could God come to the human race?

The sacred record tells us that we have been called to glory and virtue and have been given "great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). That "divine nature" is to be trained so that "we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). We need to stop counting on our fingers, though it is tolerated for children. A child that remains a child is a pathetic case. Adults must advance and go on from mathematics, to algebra, to calculus. The need for Adventists to grow up and advance in understanding the things pertaining to God and eternity is long past due, and increases with each passing year.

It is reasonable to believe that the second coming of Christ has been delayed because we have not sensed that the mystery of God remains to be finished. It can never be finished until we understand that implicit in the nature which Christ took is the potential for overcoming all sin. That He did not sin is proof of the power of the gospel. It is this power offered to all mankind that constitutes the "unsearchable riches of Christ" In His people "all men [will] see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:8, 9). The world waits to see and understand this "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26, 27).

For many years we have revelled in the prophecies, but to preach prophecy without understanding the gospel is to run without a message. The veil in the temple was rent at the crucifixion, opening to the universe new concepts of God's plan. So the veil of spiritual darkness surrounding ourselves in the end-time must be torn away. God's greatest limitation in finishing His work is our own spiritual blindness.

This is obvious from what the True Witness tells the seventh church: "Thou ... knowest not." A thousand committee actions based only on man's wisdom and strategy cannot fulfill our destiny and will only lead us on in blindness. The essence of righteousness is clear

perception. As Christ became the Son of man He grappled with sin. He saw its result and this insight He offers to us.

From the time Jesus was twelve years old until He went forward in baptism He continued to study the Old Testament. He knew from the book of Daniel when He should be baptized. But the message that John preached demanded repentance. When John called the Pharisees and Sadducees a "generation of vipers" he was only speaking the truth. They came motivated by fear, without repentance. In this climate the "Son of man" came forward to be baptized, for in repentance is the total knowledge of sin. Christ's baptism signified that He saw repentance and sin with perfect eyesight. He had the ultimate conviction, and told John, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:1-15). He was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This corporate appreciation of repentance and conviction of sin launched the Saviour on the path of obedience that was to end in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. Here He went through His "time of trouble." That time of trouble was not for want of food or shelter, but the terrible anguish of facing sin as His "self" sought an escape from the cross.

The "Son of man," the "Son of God," has marked out the path that every one of His followers will travel when the angels let loose the four winds of strife. That time of trouble for each child of God will be to face "self," and decide to accept the cross instead of seeking a detour around it. Our escape from sin can be no greater than our seeing sin for what it is. This perfect insight led the "Son of man" and the "Son of God" to His cross.

Chapter Seven

BABYLON CREATES CONFUSION

Christ said that the Spirit of truth "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). When will that time come?

"All truth" will not be realized nor can it be obtained by merely pursuing the goal of an ever larger church membership. Everyone on the planet could be baptized, yet this would not complete the atonement and blot out sin. We need to sense that the unique Adventist imperatives that expose us to ecumenical boycott are the keys to resolving the issues still pending in the great controversy. If the whole world puts an embargo on the message we have been given, we should not surrender it. Our concern for acceptance dares not deny the cross and try to override truth.

That which we have considered "expedient" to assure "our place and nation" in the ecumenical world is the same delusion that overcame the high priest as he planned to put Christ to death. Caiaphas solemnly assured his brethren in the council, "Ye know nothing at all." It is better to deny that this Man is Messiah and condemn Him to die rather than that the Romans look down on us. Should we compromise the truth of the human nature of Christ in order to save the "unity" of the church? Such an approach is not new, for Caiaphas tried it 2000 years ago. But it failed miserably (John 11:50).

The truth of the human nature of Christ cannot be separated from the truth of the genuine Holy Spirit. Babylon will become the habitation of every foul spirit, and her sins will reach unto heaven. If she is confused about the human nature of Christ (and she is), she could also be directed by a false Holy Spirit. Are we unwise to confront Babylon with the truth? What price are we willing to pay for peace with Babylon and for "unity" in our own house? The magnitude of such questions cannot be ignored.

No people in all history have faced the crisis that now confronts the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have either failed to understand our history, or we have a mandate that remains yet unrecognized. When we come to grips with "all truth" we will acknowledge that it is both of these!

For years we have talked about receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, but we sense that the gift has not come as promised. We seem to be blind to the fact that it is not an entity of energy, a token of power, that startles our neighbors and amazes the world. It is not a mystical phenomenon to produce miracles and replace reliance on the Word. On the contrary, the latter rain is a message of unadulterated truth that establishes righteousness and brings sin to annihilation.

When Jesus was grappling with the problem of trying to make His disciples "see," He was emphatic (John 16:12). He opened the door of hope and promised that understanding would come when the Spirit of truth reached the heart of God's people. For us this means that what He could not say to the disciples He must say to us now. There is no future eighth church; Laodicea is number seven.

The message that came to our pioneers was a message symbolized by three angels. Our forefathers did not live to see all that is contained in these warnings sent by God. But there is "another angel" still to come. We have yet to see the "power" and the "glory" of the message which that angel brings. Within the four messages brought by these four angels, the last three of them bear the same terrible warning concerning Babylon (Revelation 14:6-12; 18:1-3). Three-fourths of God's final message for this world concerns the same devastating topic. It can mean only that Babylon is apostate as God has said, and will yet become "full of abominations."

Rather than resist false doctrines and face the cross with all that Jesus said it involves, we seek some other route. It is easier to speak smooth words about "being forgiving," about "love," about "acceptance," about "caring." We may think that society, and perhaps the evangelical world in particular, requires us to make statements that fit its thinking. We may be concerned about abortion, AIDS, drugs, ecology, and the thousand other social/political problems facing the world. These, however, are not items on the docket of the great final court case pending before the universe. These are side issues which result from evading truth in favor of error. Though they are important no verdict can be reached outside of the supreme case pending. That case is, Satan versus Christ. What will the witnesses testify?

"Purged With Blood"

"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). We are pointed to an array of symbols in the Old Testament. This potpourri of offerings and ceremonies finds ultimate meaning only at the cross. In a similar way, almost all the episodes related in the Old Testament that often seem like dramatic historical events are parables written for our admonition, to give us insight into the final conflict.

However sweet the fruit may have been when Eve ate it, the taste did not last long. When she gave it to her husband to eat with her, the mixture of "good and evil" proved to be more than their minds could handle. Terror seized both of them. Their despair and guilt would have consumed them but for the promise given by God at this crisis hour (Genesis

3:15). The same God from whom they had alienated themselves provided hope. The seed of faith was planted in the promise, and although physical death would take its toll over time, eternal death, the second death, would ultimately be overcome by the Seed in His victory over sin.

Who could guess how far-reaching this apostasy would become? The first-born that Eve hoped would be Messiah became the embodiment of their unknown hatred of God. Cain killed Abel. Could anyone have foreseen that there would be millenniums of increasing wickedness and woe? The legacy of Cain testifies to the depth of sin and transgression that lay beneath the veil of the human heart.

Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (Genesis 4:16). That he became an apostate is clear enough, for he left the Lord. The place where he went is mentioned only once in Scripture. The word means wandering, vagrancy. The root seems to be Chaldean, and Chaldea is synonymous with sorcerers, astrologers and magicians. The first murderer and apostate on earth took up residence in a place that has become a symbol for confusion, mystery and sin.

(Years later, after the flood, Abraham was called from the land of Ur of the Chaldees. From the gates of the Garden of Eden to the great final war and climax of history, Babylon has been the seat of apostasy (Revelation 17:5). All who have wished to reverence the true God have had to dissociate themselves from this "MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.")

Cain's murder of Abel could not be concealed. The Lord heard and understood the language of Abel's blood as it cried to Him from the ground. That same language was to be spoken 4000 years later on Calvary's hill. To this day it is the language which heaven understands but which the church has yet to learn. We "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4).

We can pretend that the atonement insulates us from the problem and high cost of sin. The plea of the true Christ to take up our cross as He took up His cross is too expensive—it costs "blood." We can find a "christ" who overlooks sin, who is outside the stream of humanity, unlike His brethren, and yet can do miracles. We can hide behind this "unique" "substitute." But sin must be overcome and annihilated, not merely covered up by a substitute who excuses our continual sinning.

This is the only truth that the Scriptures know. He suffered "in the flesh," and our calling is to walk with Him in this understanding of sin and salvation. To have this "mind" is to be at war with the false doctrines of Babylon. She is content to sit on "many waters," for that is the place where the mighty of earth are made drunk with her falsehoods, and consort with her in fornication (Revelation 17:1, 2).

The Son of man chose to go down into the waters and was buried that He might fulfill all righteousness. He saw that He was a part of the corporate body of humanity and went to the depths of all that the human race suffers in its battle with "self." He died to sin (Romans 6:10).

Pampering self-love and seeking the approval of society suits the carnal heart. This appeals more than friendship with the lowly Carpenter. To have the possessions of the world is in sharp contrast with the One who had no place to lay His head. The True Christ speaks of different values: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:2, 3).

When the world is drunk with the wine of Babylon, God's people must be the most sober, and have the clearest sense of truth. Above all other times they need to be guided into "all truth" and to receive all that the Spirit offers, even to show things that are to come (John 16:13-15). This kind of wisdom can come only from heaven. Whatever grains of truth

may have been spoken by the "church fathers" in centuries gone by, will not suffice when the world is drunk with the false doctrines of Babylon.

There is serious question that anyone can understand the whole truth when the nature of Christ is misunderstood and belief in the immortality of the soul confuses the atonement.

These are two of the chief errors of Babylon, and one is a part of the other. If the soul is immortal, Christ did not die. If Christ came in the nature of Adam before the Fall, He could not be subject to death, for death is the wages of sin. He was "made to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This message is amplified in Hebrews 2:14: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

To give the remnant church discernment to recognize the fallacies of Babylon is perhaps the greatest work the Spirit has to do. Probation cannot close until this is done. God must have a people who can stand with Him in commitment to truth, and appreciate what Christ has said: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

There is an account in the Old Testament that is seldom retold except as a dramatic children's story. It needs to be remembered: "All these things have been written for our admonition." The story of Samson is a parable.

Samson: Babylonian or Laodicean?

On the surface, the life of Samson reflects no clear spiritual direction. Physically the strongest among men, he was spiritually the most weak. Yet God did not abandon him, even though murder and adultery stained his life. His sensual appetite seemed beyond control. He constantly harassed the Philistines, which they resented. Here was a man who seemed invincible in spite of committing nearly every moral atrocity, and yet God did not forsake him even though he denied his calling. (Judges 13-16). Why such a story?

Hidden within Samson's dilemma may lie the key to our own problem. It was pride in his own strength that constituted his weakness, and this confidence resulted in blindness. He was "rich and increased with goods," and needed nothing. The true source of his strength was not appreciated nor recognized. To understand his failure and his final triumph may supply hope for us today.

Samson was a child whose birth came by the special blessing of God. His mother was barren until the Lord intervened. He was born to deliver Israel from her enemy, the Philistines, but he was unable to deliver even himself until in his blindness he received sight. In this is the parable for the remnant church. The prophecy in Revelation 18 calls spiritual Israel to cast down her spiritual enemy, Babylon. This cannot be done until the enemy is recognized.

It could be that we like Samson were shorn of our strength when we fell prey to enticements proffered by a "Delilah." In Samson's case he "told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man" (Judges 16:17).

Samson's denial of his divine appointment initiated a spiritual disaster worse than commandment-breaking. To understand what happened is to see the importance of sacred history. Samson's failure was due largely to neglecting his own history. His birth was attended by circumstances that set him apart from "all other men." As Delilah vexed him from day to day and tried to entice him, her purpose was always to degrade him to the level of "any other man."

But there had been a divine mandate when he was born. He was not to be like "any other man." The whole pattern of his life had been marked out in harmony with God's

purposes. His diet and regard for life were to be different. Israel was in bondage and needed deliverance. Only help from heaven could bring salvation.

In the great controversy between truth and error, it is the Seed of the woman who brings deliverance to this captive planet and crushes the head of the enemy of God and man. But so long as the woman is "barren" there is no deliverance. Just as the promise came to Abraham by a miracle birth, so it came to Mary, and so it came to Manoah's wife. As was true of Isaac and Jesus, so a prophetic promise attends Samson's birth. He had a special calling: "He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5).

The birth of Adventism was under a similar promise of triumphant deliverance. God's sanctuary, the place of His resting, has been polluted and disgraced by sin for 6000 years. But with Adventism comes the triumphant promise, "Unto two thousand three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14).

In Samson's case the sign and seal of his prophetic destiny as Israel's deliverer was represented by his Nazarite vow. "No razor shall come upon his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5). As Samson grew up he knew he was different. He did not eat as other men. He did not look like other men. But his life became a sad testimony that he had not learned the secret of the faith that would make that difference of real value. He still *thought* like other men! His life and strength were spent using the gifts of God to pursue his own interests.

Those around him saw the blessings he enjoyed and they both envied and hated him. At rare moments the Spirit of God would find an avenue to accomplish His purposes in destroying the Philistines and delivering Israel. Usually such deliverance was degraded because it also involved delivering Samson from a crisis that his selfish worldly bent perpetrated. Samson became convinced that as heaven's favorite he could pursue whatever path he chose and expect the continued blessing of heaven. But there was one fatal flaw: he forgot his history and the teachings in that history.

As he drifted further and further from the course God had plotted for him, his spiritual vision became dimmer. Continually he was plagued by the desire to impress others and receive the approbation of the enemies God had raised him up to destroy. He even tried to marry himself into their company, but they would not have him. These foreigners who were leaders in worldly matters, having wagons and carts and weapons of iron, persistently challenged Samson. Every time he consorted with them they asked him to surrender the key to his strength and become like "other men." His mission was under attack in a way that he little dreamed of.

Finally, after flirting with destruction and compromise, he weakened and began to toy with the foundations of his own prophetic vision. He told Delilah to weave "seven locks of my head" (Judges 16:13). (Strange symbolic language: seven being complete, a total loss involving his mind, the driving force of his character).

Now destruction was only one step away. This was no longer mere indulgence in sin; this was a denial of the covenant that formed the basis of his birth. His hair was the symbol of the prophetic injunction given when he was born. To surrender his hair was to surrender that vision, and "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

This wisdom of the Proverbs was the truth of Samson's failed life. After Delilah took his hair, the Philistines took his eyes. He was unaware of what was happening. He now lost his strength, for the message in Judges 16:20 is: "He awoke out of his sleep."

Samson did not "know" his condition and so he said to himself, "I will go out and shake myself," unaware of what had happened. He did not know he had cut himself off from God. He thought he was rich and in need of nothing. The sad record is: "The Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (Judges 16:21). Jesus tells His people in the end-time

there will be another group who awake and find themselves like Samson. No strength, no power, no oil in their lamps, destitute of the very thing most needed in the crisis hour (Matthew 25:1-13).

Samson was now poor, and blind and naked. But the truth is, he was in the best condition he had ever been throughout his life. Now, though blind, he could "see" his weakness. In this condition, he began to realize something that had eluded him. He sensed that he must see himself as sinful as "all other men" before he could fulfill his commission to deliver Israel and destroy her enemies. He sensed the solemn magnitude of corporate repentance.

Laboring amidst the Philistines under the bondage of sin, a new vision began to take form in his mind. The Lord was standing at the door knocking. Having been made blind, now Samson could "see." As his understanding grew, so did his hair. The desires that had enticed him into the camp of the Philistines, which eventually destroyed his sense of mission and his prophetic promise, now appeared as they truly were. The pleasures of worldly honor and approbation had become the shackles that now bit into his flesh, and he loathed his blindness and abhorred his weakness. Like the apostle Paul who had once walked among the mighty of the nation and was himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Samson now found the God whose "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

It is a paradox that only the wisdom of God can solve, but the mystery of godliness and the mystery of iniquity mature simultaneously. The tares and the wheat are harvested together. As the spiritual vision of Samson matured so the presumptuous blasphemy of Israel's enemies also came to a climax. "Then the lords of the Philistines gathered together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. ... And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport" (verses 23, 25). They reviled the truth that made Israel God's people.

Like Belshazzar centuries later, these enemies of God brought His sacred vessels to their religious feast to ridicule heaven and His people. But this challenge and insult were to be answered now for Samson had at last begun to "see" his prophetic mission. His birth with its restrictions that had separated him from "all other men," was now understood. Nothing mattered but the fulfilling of that purpose for which he had been born. His highest desire and delight now was to obey and to follow that prophetic destiny to its end. He had learned that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

At this point he could grasp the two "pillars" of truth and exert his strength in a direction that would finally fulfill its purpose. He had come to know his weakness and likeness to all other men, but he had learned that the goodness and mercy of God could make him different. He could repent. The judgment he pronounced upon the enemies of God, he also took upon himself and in so doing he shared the sufferings of the cross with Jesus.

In that judgment was his freedom, for in realizing the full depth of the depravity of his rebellion and sin, he was set free from the darkness and blindness of it. And in that eyesalve was to be found the strength that pulled down to the ground the temple of the enemies of God. And so the record says:

"Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one in his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" (verses 29, 30).

The question for the church to face today is: When will Laodicea understand? Can she perceive how she has been shorn and stands naked? Can we with Samson learn from our own history? By consorting with the Philistines we too have had the "seven locks" of truth shaved off our heads and so have lost our mission. Compromise after compromise has been made. Now we are being told we can shake ourselves and find strength apart from the truth that has sustained and made us a people throughout our history. We are told that such things as understanding the nature of Christ and "righteousness by faith in an end-time setting" are not essential to salvation nor for the mission of the church. We are falsely assured that the world church has never viewed these subjects as central, and they should be laid aside, for these are matters that Satan would use to take advantage of God's people. This can only be the declaration of those who have had their eyes plucked out.

But more than seeing and understanding the Source of our strength, we must know what the power of the gospel is and how to use it. Only when the church is willing to die will it live. It cannot exist to impress men, no matter how exalted their positions may be in Babylon. But restoring Adventism to its doctrinal correctness is not enough. The implications of our beliefs and doctrines must be allowed to work themselves into our lives and daily experience. The doctrines of truth we have been given must rend the veil of our souls and lay bare our hidden deformity. We must see ourselves as Samson did, like "all other men." When we do we will probe the depths of the common human problem of hidden depravity. Like Samson we will have found the fulcrum against which to lean our strength and from the shadows of that repentant despair will emerge the power to pull down the stronghold of falsehood.

Samson was born with strength and all the ingredients to fulfill his destiny as the deliverer of Israel. The only element he lacked was insight proportionate to that strength. As Seventh-day Adventists, we too have been granted our doctrinal pillars of strength. However, until we gain the total insight these truths demand, we face the liability of surrendering them and our strength, along with our prophetic hopes.

The prophet Isaiah declared Israel's bondage to Babylon for the same reason: "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge" (Isaiah 5:13). The True witness repeats the same thing to the last church: "Thou ... knowest not."

Samson was a "Laodicean" who was deceived by Israel's enemy, but when he became blind, he received his sight and then he repented and overcame the enemies of the Lord. When we know that we are blind and we repent, then we will receive our sight. Perhaps the time is now upon us when we will "know," and repent, and receive the "eyesalve" offered by the True Witness. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:22).

Chapter Eight

THE GOSPEL DESTROYS CONFUSION

We must be amazed at the faith of the Creator that He should offer to place in the hands of man "the power of God." Yet this is His promise: "The gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). As if this were not stunning enough, consider the next verse which tells us that in the gospel "is the righteousness of God revealed." These scriptures reveal to us God's character and His plan for mankind

When this is put into an equation it looks like this: The gospel = the power of God = the righteousness of God. What He wants to give us, and the potential development He has in mind for us is beyond explanation. (Why should God worry with rebels? Better to exterminate them!)

Paul enhances his equation in 1 Corinthians 1:18: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. This sets up an axiom for the gospel more powerful than a nuclear bomb or any other force that remains to be invented. The equation then becomes: The gospel = the power of God = the righteousness of God = the cross.

This means that anyone who accepts the gospel is offered the same power that went into the creation of the universe, the power of God Himself. If the mind can comprehend this, it should tell us that God has held nothing in reserve when it comes to helping His family.

Clearly then, the gospel is infinitely more than merely "good news." The gospel is the very righteousness of God that overcomes sin because the power of God is in it. The gospel contained in the cross is more than a visual image, an emblem, a sign, a logo, anything that can be portrayed graphically. Consequently anyone who accepts the gospel truly, of necessity also accepts the cross. Those who know and understand the cross are in the audience chamber of God, in the most holy place of the Creator. There is only one conclusion: Paul was talking about things that deal with the atonement, which obviously is not yet complete because sin is not yet eradicated.

When we understand the atonement fully, we will understand the machinery of the human heart and its slavery to sin. Then we will be able to help humanity in a way that we have not yet dreamed of. The "power of God" will be manifest. Each church member will have an empathy for the rest of humanity that will crystallize in what the Bible calls "*agape*." Then the church will experience corporate repentance as Christ did.

Sabbathkeepers will know that each member is a cell in the body of Christ. As surely as He took human nature and became one with the race so each believer will perceive his or her place in the web of humanity. A compunction will prevail among members that echoes the plea of Christ, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Church members will sense the sins of others as though they were their own, which they would be but for the grace of Christ. They will know that the worst sins of the human race lie hidden in their own hearts as a liability waiting only to blaze forth in actual commitment.

Every believer will appreciate that "the body is not one member, but many." They will esteem Paul's message as they are convicted that the "eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the *feet*, I have no need of you ... God hath tempered the body together ... that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Corinthians 12:14, 21, 24, 25). The remnant church will understand that "corporate" repentance has nothing to do with the organization, the hierarchy. Rather it is the humble acceptance, individually and as a

body, of the call that the True Witness makes to the seventh and last church. His plea is specific that this corporate body, "the angel of the church," "be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 4:1, 19).

When God's people hear His voice and open their heart's door they will no longer need "departments," and "programs" and erudite psychology to reach hearts. We will not be "selling a product" that must be packaged to arouse the buyer's egocentric desires. There will be no bumper sticker appeal. The final atonement is not an event to be superimposed on a catalog of doctrines as the ultimate achievement. Neither can it be imposed on all the ceremonies and dogmas man has produced over the centuries, for although it may appear to be an event, it is instead an *issue*.

In the atonement is the final revelation of the mystery of godliness that has been hid from ages past and remains to be comprehended, for it is the revelation of God's character. To keep that character misunderstood is the supreme work of Satan. But it will be revealed and "made manifest to his saints." The ultimate display will be seen by the whole universe when God's people by faith appreciate His righteousness and His cross. In this is the *power* that conquers sin and confirms the hope of glory "which is Christ in you" (Colossians 1:26, 27).

With patience Christ sought to have His disciples understand but they could not. Because Jesus "knew what was in man" (John 2:25). He can help the aching hearts of humanity. He learned "through suffering," and His ultimate lesson was in the cross and this is the lesson awaiting all students enrolled in the school of Christ. They too will "know."

The final atonement confirms that there has never been any magic in the gospel. It provides no exceptions, no exemptions, and confronts sin without equivocation. No one graduates from this school without having the veil of the heart rent in twain and all secrets exposed. The ultimate secret of the human heart is the will to kill God (Romans 8:7; 1 John 3:15), and this was demonstrated at the cross. This hidden motive is not known clearly, and until it is revealed completely, the atonement cannot be finished. This is because it is impossible for God's people to live and act in harmony with heaven until they see and understand sin as heaven does. When sabbathkeepers see this vision they will know that divinity and righteousness are not far apart. They will appreciate how God tried to tell Adam and Eve that sin equals death. They will comprehend that in the cross that we bear is the chastening profitable for us, so that "we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). There is a genuine "perfecting of the saints" and this brings "unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12, 13). Not only did Christ partake of human nature, but the plan of redemption calls for human beings to partake of His holiness. To sense the damage that sin has caused is to perceive righteousness. The seriousness of this is portrayed in the message to Laodicea—the call of the True Witness is to "know" and to "repent."

The Gospel Is a Living Way

Our perception of Christ either upholds or destroys our sense of fairness and justice. All questions regarding God's dealings with mankind revolve around this Man and who He was. Jesus tried to explain when He said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Our knowing who He was, and who He is, constitutes our knowledge of God and everything pertaining to our salvation and our rejection of sin. The enmity against the serpent and sin which God placed in our hearts as a gift urges us on to life and godliness.

Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us

exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:2-4).

Freedom from sin and being "partakers of the divine nature" are not dependent on feelings, emotions, zeal or earnestness, but upon "the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." This knowledge provides clarity of spiritual vision and purifies wrong motives. This will supply Laodicea with the "eyesalve" of spiritual discernment and the faith that works by "agape". Strategic planning will not herald the "everlasting gospel" and "finish the work." This achievement is only possible as we are captivated by His glory and this will be the result of seeing His glory which is His righteousness. To be transformed, each of us must have our eyes opened where we, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

But what is this glory that changes us into the same image? The disciples walked with Jesus day after day but they did not really see Him; they were blind. They could see Him as an army general with fantastic power to feed and clothe the troops that would overcome Rome. They could see Him as a physician who could keep the nation well. They could see Him as the king to take David's throne, but they could not see Him as He really was.

What nearly overwhelmed them was seeing God dwelling in human flesh. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary" (Mark 6:3)? This is the root of the confusion today regarding Jesus our Saviour. If He took unfallen human nature, where does it leave us who are fallen? What hope do we have? We are loathe to believe that God would bring Himself down to our level that we might be changed and brought up to His level, "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The need of the disciples and our need today is the same, to see and know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Nowhere in heaven or earth is salvation available except in Him. He has something to give us and the value of that gift is determined by our great need and the gift is available from only one source.

The priceless attributes that designate and confirm Jesus as the Saviour, we dare not consider exclusively His. The choices that He made in the "flesh" to deny "self" and take up His cross daily, we dare not think exceed our abilities to appropriate and use, else we have no hope.

Perhaps this can be explained in the way the family automobile functions. If it breaks down it remains broken unless the new components are manufactured to fit the year and model of the car. There is no substitute for the genuine. The Component that came down from heaven to repair the human race fits every earthly model. The two parts are made for each other from the same pattern. What He can supply is suitable to repair every model on the face of the earth. In that repairing there will be an appreciation of the Master Designer that defies worldly appraisal. It will be evidenced in the honor given to the Repairman and the solemn realization that, except for Him, there is no hope of being remade.

Christ traversed the entire terrain of our depravity and conquered it—not without pain and terrible risk, but without defilement. The risk that God took in the creation of this world and in sending Christ in human flesh to redeem it must be understood and appreciated. The peril and risk that a tightrope walker takes can be seen by anyone, whether he falls or not. The path that Jesus trod had such a risk but He did not fall. This was not an appeasement to compensate an angry God. It was the practical solution that struck at the root of the problem. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Gospel Conquers Sin

We do not have the option of deciding whether or not Christ came "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). We need to be concerned with how this victory came about.

The usual means of dealing with this problem is to ignore it. Our dim understanding of a spiritual need for reconciliation forces from us at least a conciliatory admission of Christ's involvement with our sin and selfishness. Primarily our concern is so we can escape torment. We are inclined to separate the punishment of sin from the experience of sin. This is something the Bible refuses to endorse.

The real suffering that Christ experienced was sin itself, not just chastisement. The text does not say the punishment of sin is death but that the "wages of sin is death." This is recompense proportionate to the work performed (Romans 6:23). In the realm of our overcoming sin the cross must be seen not as an instrument of torture but as a probe of God to reach the depths of the human heart and to show the potential and hope there is for human beings.

The only way to reconcile the ability of Christ to bridge the abyss between man's sin and God's righteousness is to understand the corporate nature of redemption. There is no mystical trick in this which transfers sins to Christ like depositing funds in a bank account. The truth of the experience began at the baptism of Christ. The confrontation between man's sinfulness and Christ's freedom from sin though in man's nature, was represented by the symbol and the experience of Christ being submerged beneath the waters in baptism.

The whore of Revelation 17:1 sits on top of the waters, ruling the world like wine rules the drunkard. In contrast, Christ in His humility by baptism and in His daily life goes completely beneath the waters that throughout Scripture stand for people. The sins of the whole world were laid on Him, and bore Him down. This was not a vicarious make-believe show, but was real in His experience through birth into the human family. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He was "made of a woman, made under the law" (Hebrews 2:16; Galatians 4:4).

The process of probing the depths of our selfishness, our depravity, was inaugurated when Christ was baptized. It was climaxed at the cross when with a "loud voice," He cried, "It is finished." Here was victory over sin in human "flesh." Here was deliverance from the power of the law of heredity. At that point the whole world was ushered into the presence of God to see His glory as the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom. That which had been hid from the people was now open to the gaze of humanity.

Man and God could begin a new experience. As man was reconciled to God he would again be able to behold Him face to face. We who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world ... far off" were now in the blood of Jesus "made nigh." The "middle wall of partition" was broken down, for He "abolished in his flesh the enmity ... so making peace" (Ephesians 2:12-15).

This "loud cry" of Jesus waits to be echoed to the whole world. This proclamation will realign all the crooked thinking of man and "shake" the heavens and the earth. At last, after 6000 years, the power of God displayed in the gospel by Christ and reflected in His people will cut the work short "in righteousness" among all nations when the pronouncement can be made, "It is finished."

The Downward Path Leads Upward

The path that Christ referred to when He said, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself," eventually leads into heaven, but first it entails a descent. Each step

downward into the dark cave of our own hidden deformity also opens to us the light shed from the cross until we like Him fathom the horror of sin engulfing the whole world. To taste the depths of His despair and yet cling to the hand of mercy is to walk as He walked and overcome as He overcame. No external threatening of judgment or promise of reward can cleanse the deep recesses of the human soul like this insight will do. To see our hidden motives laid bare is as startling as was Peter's denial of the One whom he claimed to love. But just as a true realization of his weakness and liabilities was a stepping stone to Peter's complete restoration, so also is the unveiling of our own hearts.

This is the essence of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the blotting out of sin. This was the real purpose of Christ's birth as the seed of Abraham. This was to give eternal weight to the prophecy: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34, 35). The "fall" is the realization of sin in our hearts; the "rising" is the resurrection to newness of life found in the power of the gospel.

After Peter's denial he experienced a threefold confrontation with Christ. The end of this was the command, "Feed my sheep." After he had struggled through the deep waters of his soul anguish, buried in despair, he was fitted to minister to the erring and the lost. Unlike the proud Pharisees, now he had seen the depths of his weakness to such an extent that he could identify with all men. The corporate nature of his repentance opened the door that qualified him to take up the work for those who thought they could see. There was not a taint of self-exaltation. The pain and despair that raged in Peter's soul produced a compassion that forever crucified the pride that once allowed him to justify for himself a position ahead of anyone else.

It is not by chance that Catholicism chose Peter as the figurehead of popery. In his usurping, proud and unconverted state he was a perfect example of that prophetic "harlot." She blindly and presumptuously seats herself on the waters of sinfulness engulfing the human race. Here she boldly attests her infallibility as she dispenses her wine of false doctrine and rules over the hearts of mankind. Such condescension as that of Jesus in taking upon Himself the full liabilities of mankind, "flesh and blood," "the seed of Abraham," "made like unto his brethren," is anathema to the arrogant spirit of the antichrist. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist" (1 John 4:3).

When John wrote that, there were still eyewitnesses alive to attest that Jesus was physically here as a man. There is no need to argue gnosticism, as some writers urge, in order to avert the implications of this passage. He was a real man, not just a spiritual idea. His life was that of a living person, "flesh and blood." Flesh pertains to all the liabilities of sin and man's moral depravity. It is easier to search for some magic intervention in the life of Christ rather than believe He did truly travel the road of the human race, triumphing over all its moral degeneracy.

Carried to its logical end, a lack of faith in His having "suffered being tempted" makes the Gethsemane experience a sham. His travail of soul on the cross becomes theatrics. Without understanding that His was a real flesh and blood experience, there is no way to believe the prophecy that declares: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He could save His people from their sins only by their seeing what sin is and fleeing from it. His travail of soul on the cross as He faced the second death, the ultimate separation from God, was the result of unveiling the human heart.

The conviction that gripped His soul will have the same result in His church once we see sin as He saw it—eternal death, everlasting treason against the Creator. God can free us from all our hidden deformities only in proportion to our internal conviction of them. The depth of this conviction is the depth of our repentance. The path of repentance that may

appear to be downward is actually the path that leads upward to the throne of God. Christ has led the way.

Is the Power of the Gospel "On Hold"?

If the work of the gospel could be shown on a graph, it would be a ragged peak-and-valley diagram. Beginning at the gate of Eden, extending to the cross, on to the end of time, victories and defeats would have to be displayed as they have multiplied repeatedly. When will the graph level off to a steady climb?

The prophecies indicate that the end of this visual record is to be a line ascending to a peak surpassing all previous attainments, ending at the throne of God. But in this our day it is only a prophecy, and the graph remains to be plotted. How much longer can earth wait?

Perhaps more relevant, how much longer can heaven wait? Ultimately the question is: How much longer can the cosmos bear the weight of sin and support the total destruction that it produces? If the gospel is the same in all ages, why could not that ascending line on the graph have been drawn long ago? If the light of truth has been the same in all past centuries, why must the universe tolerate the ravages of sin, millennium after millennium?

If the promise given in the Garden was ever true, it is still true today. But who can argue that the head of the serpent has been bruised? To smite a snake on the head is to kill it. The destruction caused by sin and the woes it brings upon the world are all too evident to suggest that the snake is now dead. The full power and authority of the gospel must be manifest before the end can come.

This can only mean that the gospel in its ultimate mandate is "on hold." Even more seriously, if the proof of this authority and power of the gospel is to be found only in an ever larger number of baptized adherents, then the full proof will never be evident. There will always be more human beings born into this world waiting to hear the message.

Under such circumstances, there is no room in the Adventist church for a variety of conflicting opinions on topics that postpone the destiny of the world in the balance. The four angels' messages are to bring the world to a decision. We have reached the critical point of meltdown. A global Chernobyl is pending!

What Power Does Truth Hold?

Our calling is not merely to *embrace* the truth as it is in Jesus who became "flesh," but to *proclaim* it. We must not only study to know the content of the message and accept it, we must *bear the stigma* of making it known. It is this testimony of Jesus that ignites the wrath of the dragon against the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the witness of Jesus (Revelation 12:17).

The message for all mankind is, "The hour of his judgment is come." The universe will have to decide if God is just; if He can lawfully justify human beings. Truly His hour of judgment has come. What witness will His people give in that hour?

There is an adage among religion historians that says, "History overwhelms apocalyptic." This is saying that the hopes and aspirations of a prophetic movement dwindle and die in the face of delay. The more time that passes, the more arrogant and disillusioned the hopes and aspirations appear to be as the divine commission seems to fade away. Sadly, this is the case with Seventh-day Adventists.

The birth of our movement occurred in the throes of embarrassment. This gives insight to the oft-quoted phrase, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."¹ To understand God's

¹ Ellen White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

leading and "teaching in our past history" provides the discernment to know truth from error among the many voices now proclaiming different directions for the church to go.

Our frustration grows out of trying to retain our sense of a special denominational mission while divorcing ourselves from the pioneers' embarrassing apocalyptic expectations. This is like trying to defy gravity. We can no more separate our church's mission from humiliation and embarrassment, than Jesus can save mankind without the humiliation of Calvary.

We cannot go before the world with a logo of three angels and deny the catastrophic content of their message. We face the extremely difficult task of pronouncing the judgment of apostate Protestantism, Catholicism, and the rest of the world, while we are little if any different in moral character.

How can we conscientiously say that those who do not accept our teachings are Babylon? Dare we proclaim that they are caught in "the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird"? Our own divorce-rate and our lawsuits and pastimes are nearly the same as theirs, which all the world follows.

Could this be the reason our members seldom hear the sermons which distinguished us as a people a few decades ago? Could this be the reason we have almost redefined our church's mission into an *activity* program? We build huge medical institutions with newsworthy equipment, universities with the finest facilities, and Third World programs of renown. We collect tons of cast-off clothing that become the legal tender for community services. Could all these genuinely good works include a "woe" for having "omitted the weightier matters of the law"?

"To do" commendable things that the world counts worthwhile is the easiest possible course to follow. This alone may be subtle old covenant religion in the finest tradition. But "to be" what the gospel is supposed to produce and call sin by its right name and sense its ultimate decree, is the last thing the human heart desires. We cringe before the penetrating awesome glory of the new covenant. Like the shekinah in the most holy place, it reveals God and discerns the thoughts and intents of the human heart. But it brings "rest" from man's "own works" of pride. (Hebrews 4:9-12).

Our situation, though "wretched," is neither unique or hopeless. We are children of Abraham and must claim the same promises given to him.

Behold, thou art called a Jew [Adventist], and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles [non-Adventists] through you (Romans 2:17-24).

Like us, Israel faced a confrontation between her divine commission and her moral inadequacy. They like us were to lift up and proclaim God's downtrodden law. What they failed to accomplish in a literal way, we, as spiritual Israel, inherit as our commission. But our disbelief and blindness have resulted thus far in the same failure and embarrassment.

The truth that Paul tried to impress on his Jewish brethren makes sense for us today. Simply belonging to the Jewish nation, as they did, was no benefit. More was required. "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Romans 2:29). For us this means knowing the truths that

are landmarks in the remnant church, to understand the three angels' messages and the total warning included in them. We will have to realize that Babylon is what the record clearly states, and we will have to make the world know about it.

Paul's concern is doubly important for "Abraham's seed" in the end-time: "What advantage then hath the Jew [Adventist]? ... Much every way: chiefly because that unto them [us] were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1, 2). Being an Adventist carries an advantage and a responsibility—we have the responsibility of being the mouthpiece of heaven, verily an oracle that speaks for God.

For the Jewish nation their sanctuary held the central place. It was there that God communicated with His people. The tabernacle was the meeting place in all their journeys in the wilderness. Even the heathen nations sensed that the Hebrews had something majestic in it and to disregard its fixtures brought calamity upon them. But more than all this, the sanctuary itself spoke, for each article of furniture and each vessel was a reservoir of truth.

We should be humbled to realize that what sets us apart from all other movements on earth is that we too have been given a sanctuary. The single most important truth that emerged from the Great Disappointment and that remains our hallmark today, is that Jesus has begun a final atoning work in the heavenly sanctuary. Our moral quagmire, our instability before the Evangelical world, grows out of our unbelief of the oracles given to us. In this we are just like the Jews for it was the blindness of unbelief that nagged their entire sojourn and prevented them from filling their divine mandate.

But their failure and our failure cannot alter God's purposes. "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect" (Romans 3:3)?

What they did not believe and what we do not believe perpetuates the sin of all ages. It was unbelief, love of self, that crucified Christ. We have yet to understand how embarrassing this was for God. He had entrusted Israel with His oracles, but they betrayed His faith when they rejected Jesus. God's Son who became "flesh" embodied all that their oracles proclaimed. He was the true Lamb they offered morning and evening. He was the High Priest; He was the Shewbread, the Bread of life. The fragrance of His righteousness was the incense that filled both apartments. He was the Light to illuminate the sanctuary and the world. God placed in the hands of His people these precious revelations, the essence of truth and righteousness in symbol. He expected that the universe looking on would receive a demonstration of His character.

But what humiliation awaited His confidence! The people took the glory to themselves as evidence that they were "rich and increased with goods." They were in need of nothing—especially they did not need this Carpenter. All that heaven could supply was entrusted to them but they did not recognize it. The oracles in type and the oracles in "flesh" that were to dispel the accusations Satan leveled against God, they took and squandered.

Although Paul saw through the insult they rendered to God, he said that there is hope. Though they failed, someday the oracles will speak; the message will be heard. All the lies and misrepresentations heaped upon God will vaporize. The message of the three angels, the oracles placed in the hands of His remnant people, will bear fruit.

The remnant will know that the supreme matter before the universe is the trial of truth and righteousness—God's character. Their concern for a reward of sitting by the river of life or walking on the street of gold leading to a heavenly mansion will fade into the background. The Creator will be judged righteous and Babylon with all her abominations will be "thrown down, and shall be found no more at all" (Revelation 18:21). God's faith will be rewarded and justified when He is judged (Romans 3:4).

How long will God's people be obsessed with their selfish desire for their own salvation? He has made our security easy. He has compromised His standing before the universe to assure us of His commitment to truth and of our salvation from sin. The infinite

heart of God is longing for some recognition from His children. Could they sense a little of sacrifice? Could they see what is pending? Could they understand that God also has feelings? How long will it take them to understand the magnitude of the plan of salvation? Is 6000 years long enough?

As Abraham's seed, we have a responsibility to face the seeming contradiction of sacrificing our individual and corporate salvation for the sake of believing God's promises. Each person's own "Isaac" will be offered, forfeiting the future as the Word did when He became "flesh." We will never sing the song of Moses and the Lamb until we understand what it means and are willing to be blotted out of the Book. Like Moses, God's people will have a corporate love for truth and the honor of God's name that will not flinch in the face of death.

Our problem and Israel's is that we have seen the "oracles" as an end in themselves. The history of their sanctuary construction and their meticulous observance of its rituals will awaken us to our prophetic destiny. The real significance of the 2300-day prophecy concerns Messiah and blotting out of sin. He was to be cut off in the midst of the 70th week, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin and to bring in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24). The symbology of their literal sanctuary can only foreshadow, but never equal, the spiritual attainments of the remnant church when the sanctuary is finally cleansed. Learning from Israel's experience will cause God's people to see their assignment to construct a temple of truth that withstands the final fires of purification. That "temple" will not be destroyed as was the one in old Jerusalem.

When the third decree of Artaxerxes went into effect in 457 B.C., construction finally began amidst delays and disappointments. As Nehemiah's workers swept back the rubble and debris, a group of ancient ones began to wail and lament. As they gazed upon the foundations of Solomon's temple, a terrible realization smote their hearts. The beauty and majesty of that first temple could never be matched. The wealth of Israel in its greatest glory had been lavished upon the former edifice. When Israel flourished at the economic crossroads of her peers, the temple was one of the notable structures of the ancient world. But while despair and heartache absorbed the ancient ones as they drew comparisons, an amazing message of hope came from the Lord through the prophet Haggai. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:9).

At the beginning of the 2300 years ancient Israel was called out of literal Babylon to restore the literal sanctuary. At the end of the 2300 years spiritual Israel is called out of spiritual Babylon to make plain the truth of the heavenly sanctuary. This involves recovering the full power and intent of the gospel "that there should be no schism in the body," for God's people will be truly "the body of Christ" when they become the "temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:25-27; 6:19). The glory of this "latter house shall be greater than of the former," for Christ will dwell in that body as surely as He walked in the temple at Jerusalem (Haggai 2:9). The glory of that latter day "temple" will amaze the universe as the earth is lightened by God's people who have experienced in their lives the practical work of cleansing the sanctuary. This will be a display of "glory" never seen before. It will be the light of life for some but the doom of eternal death for the majority.

And so was the "glory" in the days of ancient Israel. The prophecy of Haggai was lost upon them. They needed a radical change in the way they understood "glory." Their idea of "glory" was connected with power and prestige among the nations. But "glory" by God's definition could not be lowered to this carnal concept. The glory that would elevate the latter temple above the former would be in the realm of truth. The Word "made flesh" would walk in the courts of this temple. The Seed of Abraham would show forth the "glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," and from His lips would come words like no man ever spake before.

That "glory" was to foreshadow the early rain. But it is the latter rain that brings the harvest to fruition. All the types and shadows of the Hebrew nation were but a launching pad from which would rocket the revelation of Jesus Christ. Tragically, they saw only the launching pad and it became an end in itself. Because they were enamored with the routine of their organization they failed to see what it was ordained to accomplish. In their blindness they set about to crucify the truths that had in them the power to put the revelation into orbit.

Adventism has constructed its own launching platform. In its framework are any number of beams and braces, programs and commissions, executive actions and committee recommendations, fail-safe provisions and contingency escapes, energized by a global strategy. High on the tower is an emblem of three angels portrayed in fine detail. But like our spiritual forefathers, we fail to recognize the oracles for what they are and the message therein. We remain content with the launching pad. It is an amazing structure. But all the machinery on the site and all the drawings still on the board will never produce the light and blazing glory needed for an actual launching. All signals are "go." The countdown has begun. But *everything* depends upon correctly reading and understanding the launching directions. These directions are all contained in the message we have been given! The oracles of God are entrusted to us to be given to the world.

In God's plan, truth is powerful to the complete destruction of error. In the end we will either accept the truth, no matter how great the embarrassment and bitter the repentance, or else error will destroy us. The pending crisis is not in events but in issues.

Chapter Nine

A DIAGNOSIS WITHOUT CONFUSION

God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are, in the grand plan of salvation, promises to the remnant church. Unless we can see in our heritage our kinship with ancient Israel, we fail to comprehend the magnitude of the gospel. To measure His dealings with them arouses the most profound emotions known to the human heart. God called them to be "an holy people unto the Lord ... The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). What profound respect from the Almighty, "above all people"! But why should they be accorded this elite place among the nations? Not because of any merit of theirs but because the Lord loved them (verse 8). And they tested God's love to the limit, as their heirs have done in the end-time.

If the remnant church should accept the counsel Christ has given, the world would find in this people what the world should have found in the Hebrew nation. They were called to abhor every form of false worship and every god that symbolized such heresy, even to despising the gold that adorned heathen graven images. Have we learned to detest these things? When will the *message* of the three angels be proclaimed without restraint and

compromise? Failing this, what hope is there of bringing the world to a decision between truth and error?

For too long we have been poised on the edge of great expectations. The eyesalve that is to make us see the consummation of our destiny entails a clear understanding of the prophetic oracles we have been given. To launch this final message that will lighten the earth with its glory and set God's people against all the powers of evil, demands that the message be irrefutably pure truth—the oracles of the living God. To fathom this divine obligation requires insight provided by the eyesalve that the True Witness offers.

This must not be construed as merely defending Adventist peculiarities against ecumenical or secular skepticism. If preserving the legacy of "historic Adventism" and proclaiming its doctrines is considered our goal, commonly called "finishing the work," we may find ourselves trapped. Like Jerusalem of old, we can barricade ourselves in our doctrines and programs without ever striking a blow for truth and for the God of heaven. With good reason, a prophet has warned this church that the destruction of Jerusalem is a type of the final conflict.

Pending Issues Remain Unclear

If Adventism has a message that provides the final answers to the problems facing mankind, it is imperative that the issues be set forth clearly. According to the judgments pronounced by the three angels, the issues are the most serious that have ever faced the human race. We must do more than trim and manicure the edges of Christian orthodoxy. The message of the three angels deals with the core of Christianity.

The wrath and the doom proclaimed by the third angel can only be leveled against those who finally reject the truth of the gospel. God cannot measure out the most frightful judgment in all Scripture for simply neglecting a spiritual manicure. If taken seriously, Adventism must bring the gospel before the whole world in a way it has never seen it before.

Only a work this unique, this radical, could warrant the judgment announced by the three angels. The confrontation pending calls for a kind of open-heart surgery as a last resort. Only a procedure this bold could ignite the fury of opposition and persecution forecast in our prophetic legacy, and awaken the multitudes in Babylon.

The rebellion, the anguish, the suffering and pain of the 6000-year holocaust is an historical fact amplified with each passing year. If Christ is delaying His return, and if the consummation of His kingdom extends the suffering and nightmare conditions on this planet for even one day, there must be imperative reasons. Celestial foot-dragging would appear unconscionable before the jury of the universe. The continuing plight of mankind and the ultimate judgment announced demand that whatever remains to be resolved in the conflict must be proportionate to the suffering perpetuated meanwhile.

The fact that the conflict has not been resolved in six millennia can be the only logical reason for the postponement of the second advent. The initial questions raised about God's character and the ensuing rebellion that launched this great controversy have not been fully understood. They *remain to be refuted*. Reason demands that we appreciate this horrendous dilemma.

No one more fervently wants a resolution of the conflict than God Himself! He has already demonstrated His willingness to provide a solution and emptied heaven to prove it. For this reason "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In the incarnation, "to be made like his brethren," is the diagnosis and prescription for sin. But His testimony and defense carry no more weight than anyone else who is called into court. God must abide by His own rules. The jury must be presented with evidence that proves Christ's battle with sin

was on the same level as all humanity who battle in this war. The law demands justice for all, irrespective of position.

When there is a trespass, "take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). All who are tried stand in the same court. God cannot win this case, this devilish controversy, without the faithfulness of His witnesses. But "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses" (Acts 1:8). That "power" enables His people in this trial to stand together upholding truth. Their witness agrees with and supports the testimony of the Chief Witness. He understood the case from the beginning. He declared that He could "do nothing" by His own self." He said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5:30, 31). Those who stand with Him understand also the implications and they will bear the same testimony. Their concern will not be for themselves but for the validation of truth and the vindication of God's name.

The specific witness of Adventism is the three angels' messages. These declarations that exonerate heaven are bound up with the glory of God and the cleansing of the sanctuary. This message was our "passover" as the passover gave birth to Israel and forecast the ultimate purpose of their existence. So the cleansing of the sanctuary involves truth as certain as the passover blood was upon Israel's doorposts. To understand our Adventist "doorpost" symbology, we must go back to ancient Israel's sanctuary. There was something unique about the service. Not only was there an atonement and cleansing for the people, but there was an atonement for the *holy place*, for the *tabernacle* and for the *altar* (Leviticus 16). Inanimate objects were joined with the sin of human beings and together there was an atonement for both. Nothing was omitted in the work of cleansing the camp and the people "that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" (verse 30).

The Problem of the Cleansing of the Sanctuary

There is immense significance in this once-a-year, great Day of Atonement cleansing of sins that defiled the holy place. This work completed the yearly round of ministration. Bound up with it is our reason to exist.

The 1844 episode in our history, and the investigative judgment sink their roots deeply into Leviticus 16 to sustain their validity. But apart from defending the denominational pedigree, we have gained little that offers hope of solving the great controversy. We must have missed something. World events and our selfishness have blinded our eyes to the real problem of issues.

Underlying the many details of the rituals in the sanctuary service is a perplexing concept. Why should lifeless objects require redemption? *People* can accumulate the guilt and defilement of sin, but how do *inanimate objects* become defiled? To claim that the sin and guilt is transferred from the people to the altar, begs the question. Sin is not an entity that we can casually transfer from one place to another, therefore it could not be carried as an object into the holy place. What is God conveying when He places the stigma of defilement upon the articles in the first apartment?

Adventism's call into existence was based on the sanctuary doctrine. This teaching is crucial to its continued well being and future triumph. If the sanctuary is a divine chalkboard in the school of truth, those defiled vessels and articles of furniture would represent redemptive truths that are themselves inadequate and in need of cleansing and redemption.

In other words, the very means God uses in saving people in the ministry of the holy place stigmatizes itself in the process. As the centuries of ceremonial services were inadequate and required the real Lamb to come at the appointed time, so the complete understanding of the incarnation and the atonement must give birth to greater truth *before*

the second advent. This is inherent in the Day of Atonement cleansing of the sanctuary. There is a liability pending. According to the book of Hebrews, this liability of the holy place is the result of atoning for sin without completely eradicating it.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered (Hebrews 10:1, 2)?

The spiritual equation is simple. The daily round of ceremonies is identified as inferior for one reason: it is repetitious; it is never finished. The daily or continual sacrifice for sin that occupies the first apartment ministry does not remove sin, otherwise it would end. Sacrificial offerings are made necessary by sin; continued sinning required continual offerings. The perpetual offerings in the holy place are a testimony to the inability of that ministry to remove sin. That inability forces it to bear the onus of the sins it forgives until it can be cleansed by a superior ministry. The legal declarations of the first apartment that credit believers with more righteousness than it imparts, leave such redemptive procedures vulnerable to misrepresentation.

This is the reason that although God's people may receive the assurance of justification and pardon, God actually libels Himself in ascribing that forensic legal status to them. The physical image of a bloodied Saviour pleading in our behalf before the throne of heaven is a representation of what mediation actually entails through the credit advanced.

The dimensions of this credit advance can be seen around the world in the hard facts of life. During the 1980s, many nations of the earth experienced a spending spree. Millions were happy with the prosperity that appeared on the surface. Never mind the debt. Banks made loans into the billions with only a "hope" as security, and with disregard that all debt must be paid sooner or later. Economic laws that cannot be annulled were set aside. But these will come back to haunt us and eventually demand settlement. *Credit advanced against some future miracle is doomed to default.*

The "everlasting gospel" that is to be preached to them that dwell on the earth is likewise subject to law. Any interruption that postpones the penalty of sin accrues a debt recorded at the altar of the holy place. Adventism's task is to reveal that the celestial account books must be opened and audited. The vast resources provided by the cross can be of value only as they are appreciated, understood, and invested in the transformation of human lives. This gives meaning to the call of the heavenly Bookkeeper when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Rightfully, He is asking only that the espoused marriage partner walk with Him and appreciate heaven's investment when the Word became "flesh." He is asking that the protracted engagement come to an end, that the marriage may take place. True love cannot be requited by substitution.

Clearly then, the substitution of Jesus prolongs the pain and suffering, even now. Our sins that require continuing mediation constitute the embarrassing stigma that heaven must endure. As long as our sins compel such substitutionary mediation, the atonement must be viewed more in terms of shielding its beneficiaries than in restoring them. The cleansing of this first apartment must therefore involve a resolution of that contradiction which renders saints *legally* secure from their sins apart from their obtaining a corresponding victory over them.

This is the reason why all the faithful of past ages are held in the limbo of the first death. They must remain in suspense until the redemptive truths that ministered their salvation can be vindicated. "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39, 40). The saints of all ages remain bound in the grave, waiting on us.

To bring this release and the ultimate fruition of the gospel is the reason for our existence and for the truth we have been given. The worst crime in all history has not yet been solved because it has not yet been understood. It will never be understood until the sin committed at the cross is recognized as the vindication of "flesh" overcoming sin. The wrath of justice displayed was to confirm to human hearts that the cross is not to shield humans from facing death but to assure them that human flesh can survive death. The contest made clear that "flesh" can overcome sin by the grace of Christ.

It was as a "man" that Christ had to suffer the consequences of man's sin. It was as a "man" that He had to endure the wrath of God against transgression. It was in His "human nature" that He feared He would be unable to endure the conflict with the powers of darkness. His "humanity shrunk from the last crowning sacrifice."¹

"It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony.... His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. ... Few would be willing to break from its power."²

"But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive Him. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ."³

As human beings, members of the remnant church, we "are partakers of flesh and blood." Christ "himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). This provides not only legal "remission of sins that are past," but "Christ imbues men with the attributes of God" and "builds up human character after the similitude of divine character" so that "the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer." This is the ultimate *victory* in the cosmic battle. This is the fruit of the "everlasting gospel."

Finally, here is a group of believers who are born of God and overcome the world "and this is the victory that over-cometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Bound up in this victory, this glorious triumph, is the Lord's promise: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and ... I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem ... I will write upon him my new name" (Revelation 3:12). There is no substitution for this experience which the remnant church must go through before the second advent.

¹ Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 686, 687, 690; see chapter, "Gethsemane," pp. 685-697.

² *Ibid.*, p. 752.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 762.

Chapter Ten

NO CONFUSION: BRETHREN MADE LIKE HIM

In the book of Revelation, John tells the church that the battle between truth and error that began in heaven was already won by Christ before the conflict came to this earth. The "dragon ... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan ... was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

This means that the theological hassle about "propensity" and inherited problems and babies and/or fetuses becoming guilty and being or not being sinners is the fruit of speculation. The contest began among sinless beings, where there were no inherited biases; there was no human nature in the conflict. The battle and the conquering of Satan by two-thirds of the angels in a sinless nature had been accomplished before sin invaded this world. That part of the case has been won. It has been settled that among sinless beings truth is stronger than error; sin cannot stand before the law. Michael overcame Satan.

Therefore to put Christ into a worldly contest having taken only a sinless nature like Adam had before the Fall, is to defy the rules of justice. Human beings need a Saviour because they are sinful, therefore the final verdict must depend upon equal conditions affecting the contestants.

What would the Olympic judges do if it were discovered that a woman who had taken gold medals in several feats had had a sex change six months previously? An unlikely case, but surely there is no question the judges would disqualify the contestant and recall the medals.

A real life case is on record. In the recent Olympics the champion runner who took the gold medal with praise heaped upon him for outstanding achievement was discovered to have been on steroids. Thus the runner had an advantage; the race was unfair and the contest was annulled. The gold medal was recalled and the contestant was disgraced. Such a verdict made no problem for the judges.

The greatest case in all history is now pending. If the incarnation was only partial and the standard of justice was not as stated to be; if Christ did not partake of the same flesh and blood as all children of men; if He was not made like unto His brethren, the universe would be compelled to declare a mistrial. If the Defendant achieved His record by unfair methods, then the Accuser of the brethren, "that old serpent called the Devil," could win his case before it goes to court.

But the matter goes much deeper. No court can render a judgment without a law that establishes a standard of measurement. In this case the trial will be settled by the standard of Jesus whose character is a transcript of the law. The whole world will be judged in righteousness "by that man" Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31).

Christ left His position in the heavenly courts, and came *to this earth to live the life of human beings*. This sacrifice He made in order to show that Satan's charge against God is false—that it is possible for man to obey the laws of God's kingdom. ... Christ took upon Himself human nature, a nature inferior to His heavenly nature. ... Christ *did not make-believe* take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature. ... In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin.¹

¹ Ellen White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1129, 1130, 1131, italics supplied; see Appendix.

The war in heaven was fought between Lucifer the chief angel of the sinless heavenly host, and the Creator of the universe. The battle on earth was between this fallen angel, now called Satan, and Christ who took fallen human nature. He left His heavenly position and became known as Son of man. In the original war in heaven the contestants were in a *sinless* environment. In the war on earth the contestants were in a *sinful* environment. If in the war on earth the Accused, the Son of man, remained "exempt" from having "to live the life of human beings," and would "make-believe" take human nature, then the case was rigged and was illegal.

But it was legal. It was just. It was righteous. It was ordained by God. It laid a foundation and provided a system that would satisfy the deepest emotions of the human heart and challenge the most profound thoughts of men for now and eternity. There remains only to have our eyes opened to discern the issue.

The Path to True Unity In the Church

Political and economic confederacies in every era of earthly history have pursued the Utopian mirage of unity. Only the truth as it is in Jesus, matured and fully developed, will ever bring true "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). The diplomacy and policies that extol human negotiation and compromise as the solution to mankind's turmoil discount completely a gospel that knows no compromise and is nonnegotiable.

In the gospel are absolutes that will emancipate us from the turmoil and confusion of fallen mankind. Only as we understand the truth can the mortal bonds of our human nature be broken so that we can "grow up into him in all things" (verse 15). We will see as He saw, think as He thought, believe as He believed. God will never issue a divine manifesto to herd humanity into the kingdom like so many dumb beasts. We must intelligently discern the path or we will never follow it.

The outpouring of the Spirit of truth in the latter rain will fall in much the same way as the early rain. The disciples did not awake one morning with new personalities and charismatic powers. The outpouring of God's Spirit was not initiated by throwing a celestial switch. It began on a little road to a tiny village a few miles from Jerusalem.

Two disillusioned disciples, perhaps hoping to get away from the ridicule and reproach of the city, were plodding their way into the eventide, heading for Emmaus. With all their expectations shattered, the Scripture tells us "they talked together of all these things which had happened" (Luke 24:14). Though sorely disappointed, they were mindful of their history and they cherished a glimmer of faith which was rewarded when "Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days" (verses 15-18)?

They were incredulous. How could anyone be ignorant of what had happened in Jerusalem? But Jesus could not force the scales from their eyes, anymore than the thunder and lightning on Sinai could inscribe the law on Israel's heart. Only the eyesalve of spiritual understanding would allow them to see Him as the essence of all truth.

Jesus did not astound them with celestial glory and majesty. But with sorrowful, piercing words He said: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (verses 25-27). If the Master should walk in the midst of

Seventh-day Adventists today, would His reprimand be any less dramatic? Would He not tell us that our scriptural understanding is wholly inadequate?

As He opened their understanding, their thirst was deepened, for they urged Him to stay the night with them. "As he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him" (verses 30, 31). It was as He blessed and broke the bread that their sight was perfected. With the bread in hand their eyes were opened, and in a spiritual sense it must follow that they drank His "blood" and were nourished in heavenly understanding. The physical food was of lesser importance. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

It mattered not that night had closed in. With hearts aflame they "rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem." When they reached the room where the little company had locked themselves in for fear of the Jews, they gained access with an unseen Visitor. With joy, with skepticism, and with what surely must have been animated conversation, they discussed the events of the day, only to be startled afresh with the appearance of Jesus in their midst. Then to prove He was real, He did that which confirms human life and health; He asked for something to eat. When He had eaten, He spoke to the whole group like He had spoken to the two on the way to Emmaus.

He went to the Scriptures, the law of Moses, the prophets, the psalms, and rehearsed the things concerning Himself. The account makes clear: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (verse 45). Then was granted to them the beginning of the former rain as Jesus said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:21, 22).

Understanding came before the gift of the Holy Spirit could be given. Fifty days were spent in study, prayer and reviewing the past three years. When spiritual discernment came and their eyes were opened, heaven could grant the blessing that was essential. In a special way they were being made ready to be a people "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21, 22).

As the disciples reconstructed the temple of truth from the material that Jesus had given them, their prophetic history illuminated their earlier embarrassment and discouragement. The very events that had initiated their disappointment and humiliation became the Chief Cornerstone of their newly developed faith. With comprehension until now unknown, they were in a condition for heaven to come close, imparting the Holy Spirit. "There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). It was as if insight blew through their minds and the fire of the Refiner rested upon their brows. All confusion vaporized in a kind of fusion *when prophecy and understanding were united* and the explosion resulted—Pentecost.

New Wine and Old Bottles

For too long Seventh-day Adventists have skirted their own prophetic history and viewed it through a darkened glass. The True Witness yearns to escort us out from the maze of confusion where detouring Evangelical criticism has led us. But that journey involves far more than reinstating the faith of our fathers. It is a path of transformation. We need a revolutionary unveiling of truth such as Pentecost brought to Israel's prophetic history. Our prophetic legacy must yet yield its harvest of spiritual discernment.

Would we have joined with the crowd who were offended by the display of God's power at Pentecost and with dim understanding judged it to be the fruit of debauchery? The Scriptures assure us they lacked discernment and could only speak the thoughts of their

hearts: "They were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:12, 13).

These critics little realized the truth of their derision. The disciples were now "full of new wine," of heavenly vintage, such as no one had ever tasted before. Their accusing skeptics did not recognize that these men who had before demonstrated only weakness and confusion of face, were now "new wine skins" filled with a power previously unseen and unknown. Their spiritual vision had shifted from the earthly authority of the Jewish system to that of heaven itself. They no longer trembled before the leaders and potentates of earth. Their entire understanding of truth had undergone a radical transformation. For them, former things had passed away and all things were new. This change ended forever the usefulness of the temporal sacrificial services of Judaism and provided a new spiritual vision in a new spiritual environment. The self-satisfaction that had blinded them to the inadequacy of an earthly system waxed old and vanished away before the testimony of the True Witness.

The revelation of Jesus in the "flesh" as the fulfillment of types and shadows recreated their understanding of the system of salvation, and this in turn remade their experience. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But their experience was merely a shadow of the real which awaits an end-time fulfillment. The consummation of this transition ultimately results in Christ's return and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom. In this experience is to be found the destiny of Seventh-day Adventists. But the frightening question that looms before us is, will we repeat their history? They thought they were "rich and increased with goods" and the True Witness tells us that this is our fantasy also. The facts show exactly the opposite. If His diagnosis is true, we face the death and resurrection of our own preconceptions, and our system of salvation must undergo a transformation as radical as that of the apostles' day.

The Jews who rejected the light given at Christ's first advent, and refused to believe on Him as the Saviour of the world, could not receive pardon through Him. When Jesus at His ascension entered by His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary to shed upon His disciples the blessings of His mediation, the Jews were left in total darkness, to continue their useless sacrifices and offerings. The ministration of types and shadows had ceased. The door by which men had formerly found access to God, was no longer open. The Jews had refused to seek Him in the only way whereby He could then be found, through the ministration in the sanctuary in heaven. Therefore they found no communion with God. To them the door was shut.

....

The condition of the unbelieving Jews illustrates the condition of the careless and unbelieving among professed Christians.²

Do Adventists see their position like the "unbelieving Jews" regardless of what we may profess? We have spent vast resources of time and energy to reassure the Evangelical world that we are like they are, when in fact we were raised up by God to burst the old wine skins of tradition by a revolutionary insight that would lighten the world with glory. To claim that we are the remnant that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, demands the reality of Christ's soon-to-be-ended High Priestly ministry which does not allow us to bypass the moral realities of such declarations. For us to accept the label of "commandment keepers" will not bear the scrutiny of logic while our understanding

² Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 430.

revolves around a system that makes up for the lack of heart-felt commandment appreciation. Our history tells us that we are to prepare for the end of that ministry.

For this to take place in any community of human hearts and lives, the full truth of righteousness by faith must be clearly understood. Genuine righteousness by faith is not only a truth, but an experience in harmony with the heavenly High Priest's ministry in His closing work of atonement. Continued centuries of ignorance of this truth cannot resolve the problem. The "third angel's message in verity" is vitally needed. In the absence of that truth, no body of people anywhere can be prepared for the second coming of Christ, regardless of their religious affiliation. The High Priest cannot forever minister His blood in substitution to cover the perpetual sinning of His people. He must accomplish something on the Day of Atonement that was never done previously. He must have a people who "overcome" even as He "overcame," a people who condemn sin in the flesh through His faith.

The Evangelical world deplores this idea as surely as the Jews rejected the light given at Christ's first advent. The greater peril is that Adventists are already tinged with the same immature Evangelical concept of the gospel. We face the danger of hiding behind a supposedly perpetual High Priestly ministry which makes provision for continuing transgression. Such compromised theology perpetuates substitution indefinitely and unwittingly postpones the second advent to some dim future time when God arbitrarily decrees His return. But this cannot be! This destroys the principle and purpose of the Day of Atonement. Intercession must come to an end.

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. ...

When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing.³

The "gospel" of everlasting substitution commandeered by the "little horn" power, and approved by the Evangelical world, justifies and perpetuates sin and therefore logically extends Satan's reign. The practical outworking of this was explained to the church over 100 years ago.

[Jesus] was borne to the holiest, where the Father sat. There I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. ...

The company . . . did not know that Jesus had left [the holy place.] Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, "Father, give us Thy Spirit." Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived, and to draw back and deceive God's children.

I saw one after another leave the company who were praying to Jesus in the Holiest, and go and join those before the throne, and they at once received the unholy influence of Satan.⁴

³ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

⁴ Ellen White, *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56; the last sentence from the second printing, prior to and not included in the 1882 edition currently available. See: Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, p. 624.

This "unholy influence of Satan" is the secret impetus of all the lawlessness that pervades the modern world at every level of society. But this is the very thing that the true gospel is to conquer. Only those "that do his commandments" will have a right to the tree of life (Revelation 22:14). This is what all the symbols of the sanctuary plainly declare. This is the truth of the three angels' messages to be proclaimed to all people everywhere. This is the coming theological earthquake that has not registered yet on any denominational seismograph. Christ's high priestly ministry is a gracious *pro tem* provision that must come to an end. It has secured our pardon and it is our *title* to heaven, but sanctification imparts the needed *fitness* for translation. Jesus said, "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

Like His Brethren

Satan is dedicated to keep the enabling power of the gospel eclipsed and to hold God's people in confusion. He is determined that they shall not understand that his "works" were destroyed by Christ as He in human nature "was manifested to take away our sins" (1 John 3:5).

This understanding is the connecting link, the junction box that dispenses power and merges our weakness with heaven's strength. This provides the solution to the final atonement. We must see Christ's victory in terms of His plan for us—our own victory. This means recognizing that all our liabilities rest upon Him. Heaven will never wave a magic wand to free us from the bondage of sin. Such deliverance would deny that there is a war between Satan and Christ. Such mystical deliverance would make a detour around the cross and support the enemy's claim that the law cannot be kept. Jesus must position Himself where we are if we are to obey truly His injunction, "Follow me."

The Saviour of mankind must actually experience our travail and anguish in the struggle against "self." This is why "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Adventism's unique function is to unveil this truth of a people made righteous by faith. This makes the message of the first angel effective for those who "fear God and give glory to him." As God's people fathom the sufferings and conflict of Christ, their restoration will be complete and revealed before the universe. This revelation will replace the substitutionary gospel that a mere legal pronouncement exempts us from our moral liabilities. Substitution will be replaced by the genuine imparting of Christ's righteousness that He provides "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). His being made sin for us will bear the fruit intended that "we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This puts sin to an end.

This is the ultimate work of the gospel for which all creation is waiting. This will be proof that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" from sin. This will be the end of substitution for continual sinning, the end of intercession. The atonement at last has been completed because at last the hearts of God's people are fully "at-one" with Him. The alienation caused by sin is ended. This must precede the proclamation: "There came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done" (Revelation 16:17).

The Last Enemy Overcome

The universe continues to wait for this solemn proclamation until Laodicea comes to "know" the mystery of godliness in contrast to the mystery of iniquity. The church must cease from old covenant dead works and go on to perfection of character. Every aspect of the atonement must be made plain. The experience of Christ must be the experience of His people and *that* is none other than the experience of the cross. It was this experience that Peter rejected, and it was this attitude that Christ called the domain of men, the throne of

Satan (Matthew 16:23). This is the naked abomination of Babylon. In all the centuries since Calvary, believers have heard the same call to take up the cross, but the remnant will hear with a keenness that exceeds all others and will be sealed with a mutual bond of love stronger than the powers of hell. They will "know" that which no previous people have known.

When James and John came to Jesus with a special request for preferential treatment, they little knew what they asked or what was involved. The immaturity of their plea was like a parable of a people in the end-time known as Laodiceans, who talk much of the latter rain and the second advent without sensing that both are the ultimate display of the Creator's power and majesty in vanquishing sin. For those two disciples to ask boldly for the highest places in the king' dom was the height of self-exaltation.

Their request for places on the right and left hand of the King in His glory received a frank, deliberate answer: "Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Their confidence overflowed and they replied, "We can." With patient words, Jesus then told them they spoke more than they understood, for truly they would drink, they would be baptized, but it was not His to give them the high place they coveted. That place was reserved and "it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared" (Mark 10:35-40).

In that hour they did not know what was involved to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." That place on the right hand and on the left is for a select group who understand the travail of Jesus, and sense His battle with sin. That is a reserved special place: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame" (Revelation 3:21). A mutual conquering of sin would provide a mutual reigning in glory, and for each person seated there has to be a cross. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain [leader] of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10).

The testimony of Scripture assures those who are willing to listen, that there was far more to the agony on the cross than the payment of a legal debt. There was victory over sin. Jesus did far more than die the second death—He conquered it. The portrayal is clear:

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of the Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor.⁵

Whatever the second death could hurl at the helpless soul of Jesus on the cross, it could not crush His faith. The sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. The very power of sin to exclude us from the favor of heaven was broken. The initial blindness that sin inflicted upon our first parents in the Garden was defeated by the second Adam, the Son of man. The misapprehension and fear that have blinded man and kept him in the bondage of sin, were vanquished by the faith of Jesus. He saw beyond the lie of sin and refused to heed its accusations. "He saved others; himself he cannot save. ... When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Mark 15:31; Luke 23:46). His faith was triumphant.

At this point in the history of the universe, sin was made evident for what it is. Every human heart was exposed. All the hidden desires and motives that could deceive mankind

⁵ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.

were brought to the surface by the Refiner's fire at Calvary when "love of self" in the human heart was conquered by the Son of man.

But the death of sin must be attended also by a resurrection from it. And here it was that the faith of Christ clung to the evidences of God's prior acceptance. The Scriptures He had stored in His heart sustained Him so that He could not sin against God. That evidence and those promises He employed by faith, and triumphed over the abyss of the second death. He was dead but now He lives and has "the keys of hell." And so ...

By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:14-22).

How could words be plainer?—"no more offering for sin" means an end of substitution. It is no longer required, and the penitent may enter the holiest without fear. Here is the substance of things hoped for; here is the evidence God has promised to His people. Here is a new and living way, consecrated for us by that One who became flesh and lived among us so that we could behold the glory of God. But going on to greater heights than this: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Brethren Like Him

The sacrifice that God offered consecrated a new and living way through "his flesh." It has perfected forever them who are sanctified to produce results that astonish the angelic host, both fallen and unfallen. Satan is dumfounded at the transformations made upon human hearts by God's abundant grace that closes the door to his sophistries. The unfallen angels, seraphim and cherubim, "look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God." The picture of God's people, portrayed by the Lord's messenger creates an ecstasy of soul beyond description.

Our church has been given ample facilities to render to God the large revenue of glory purchased and made available on the cross. This majestic description gives power and hope while the complete fulfillment is pending. The pulpits of the church around the world are waiting to resound with this powerful good news:

To His church, Christ has given ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. The church, being endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display. The declaration in His intercessory prayer, that the Father's love is as great toward us as toward Himself, the only-begotten Son, and that we shall be with Him where He is, forever one with Christ and the Father, is a marvel to the heavenly host, and it is their great joy. The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich, full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an

encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against. In their untainted purity and spotless perfection, Christ looks upon His people as the reward of His sufferings, His humiliation, and His love, and the supplement of His glory. ...

Christ has never forgotten the days of His humiliation. In passing from the scenes of His humiliation, Jesus has lost none of His humanity. ... He never forgets that He is our representative, that He bears our nature.⁶

The wonder of the angels must be amplified to tears, as they listen to questions bandied about among God's people today. They hear church members asking and doubting how Christ could become one of the human family like Adam after the Fall. They hear jesting about how His people can never be overcomers before He returns. They see His church challenge the idea that the remnant in their untainted and spotless perfection are the supplement of His glory. They read belittling remarks about an "esoteric brand of righteousness by faith" with scorn heaped upon the call of Christ for "corporate repentance" and a return to the message God sent to His people in 1888.⁷

In all history have any people shown such apostate lack of faith as is now obvious? What can make His people receive the eyesalve He offers? The evidence is mountain high, and even casual study brings forth ever more confirmation of the truth about His incarnation. The gospel is straightforward, and every part of it supports and vindicates God's character. We need only to believe the truth we have been given.

The magnitude of how and why Christ took human nature leaves no doubt as we are assured:

He took upon Himself human nature for no other purpose than to place man on vantage ground before the world and the whole heavenly universe. He carried sanctified humanity to heaven, there always to retain humanity as it would have been if man had never violated God's law.⁸

Here is condescension that should arrest the most calloused—Christ purchased a mutual victory. God and man are to be in harmony, but there are those who would tell us that we cannot be in harmony. It is claimed that man is bound to continue wallowing in sin until Jesus comes. Surely our blindness is as great as the scribes and rulers of 2000 years ago. They were convicted. Their understanding was opened and they were convinced, but they would not receive the Seed of the woman. They had been privileged with every temporal and spiritual advantage heaven could supply, but they turned away from the light.

There is growing dichotomy in the church today, there is outright objection to Christ taking fallen human nature. Many insist on holding the pagan philosophy of Babylon that proclaims God's "dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:11). (The only kind of "flesh" there is in the world is fallen, human flesh.) Our reticence to call sin by its right name, makes provision for its continuation. In the meantime, we oppose the discussion of the heaven-sent truth of righteousness by faith. All this is tantamount to the course the Jews took in Christ's day. The results will be equally disastrous.

As we near the end of time this hatred for the followers of Christ will be more and more manifest. Christ took humanity and bore the hatred of the world that He might show men and women that they could live without sin, that their words, their

⁶ Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 18, 19; for a profound enlarged description see pp. 17-23.

⁷ *Adventist Review*, November 22, 1990, p. 5.

⁸ Ellen White, *The Upward Look*, p. 313; original, Manuscript 156, October 26, 1903.

actions, their spirit, might be sanctified to God. We can be perfect Christians if we will manifest this power in our lives.⁹

The purpose of the gospel is to restore to the human race that robe of God's glory that Adam had before the Fall, and more than that—not only to be like Adam, but "like Christ." This is why we are assured that the love of the Father is so great that "we should be called sons of God." But the world does not know Him. They want Him to be other than He was. In the same way His people will be misunderstood and with Him will be rejected by the world. The world is not willing to accept a people such as John saw, "born of God," and in whom "his love is perfected," and who "have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are [they] in this world" (1 John 3:9; 4:12, 17). They will be brethren like Him!

What the gospel did in Christ it can do in every man, woman and child who believes. All creation is waiting for this "manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19). It will continue to wait until the demonstration is complete "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This divine purpose is portrayed in a few verses from Paul's letter to the Galatians:

When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Galatians 4:4-7).

In the final generation God will stand vindicated before the universe. Satan will not only have been overcome by the Son of man, the Lord Jesus, but by all the sons of Adam who reflect the image of God fully. There will be "144,000" of them, brethren and sisters by the power of the gospel made like unto Him.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 303; original, Manuscript 97, October 16, 1909.

Postlogue

Laodicea has for too long drawn on the account of luxurious blindness that one day will demand compound interest. We have been more than willing to justify a substitutionary grace that has insulated us from awareness of the consuming fire of God's shekinah glory. Like James and John, we have been content to talk about and even plead for things without knowing what we were asking. As Jesus told them, He tells us, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Mark 10:38).

We have been blind to the specific counsel given to this church at its very beginning. Truth has lain dormant for over a century. We are told that the seal of God will be placed upon those only who "reflect the image of Jesus fully." There will be no latter rain "refreshing" without "victory over every besetment."¹ The final events cannot take place while God's people continue in sin and to hide behind mediation. The final judgment of the world must wait until there is a people willing to be members of the group Jesus declared were righteous. They will be sealed in this righteous condition, pronounced "holy" as the fruit of righteousness, and they will remain "holy" (Revelation 22:11).

While Jesus continues in mediation a line is being drawn in heaven between the righteous and the unrighteous. In heaven's eyes the righteous vindicate truth and pass judgment on the unrighteous by their evident lifestyle. By the grace of Christ the holy become the norm which proves there is no need for sinning. This is the practical outworking of the investigative judgment going forward now to develop this body of believers. The result of this ultimate dealing with sin is made clear to the church:

Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus was ministering in the sanctuary, the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had received His kingdom, having made atonement for His people, and blotted out their sins. The subjects of the kingdom were made up. The marriage of the Lamb was consummated. ...

As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. *There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God.* While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed, and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent. It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary. ... In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus' mediation, the saints were living in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. ...

The plan of salvation had been accomplished, but few had chosen to accept it.²

This forthright counsel means that before the end can come there must be a people who reach spiritual maturity. They will speak to God "as a man speaketh to his friend," like the Lord spoke to Moses and Moses spoke to the Lord (Exodus 33:11-19). With holy boldness they will beseech the Lord to show His glory and God will be gracious to make His goodness, His righteousness, to pass before His people. They will "know" the Lord. This glory, this knowledge, this righteousness, this message will illuminate the earth. The need for mediation will have ended. This group will prove that: "Strong meat belongeth to them that

¹ Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 281, italics supplied

are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

For millenniums God has had to bear with a soul-wrenching problem described in the book of beginnings:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (Genesis 6:5, 6).

What kind of return has God received for His patience and infinite outlay? Are all the millenniums of death and agony the regrettable byproduct of an irresponsible obsession? Or is there a divine genius underlying the raging storm of human history? What incomprehensible value does God recognize in redeemed man that has sustained His faith to endure 6000 years of human contempt and unbelief?

Questions like these confront the rational mind. They cannot be avoided and they provoke the Adventist conscience. Perhaps answers can begin to be found in the record of Genesis when it all started.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made (Genesis 2:1-3).

Can we imagine God resting? His creations are not like things we make. Our inventions and the projects we build are inanimate. We can set them on a shelf or put them in the garage and then sit and rest when we are done. But God's creation is living and breathing. He is the great cosmic Source of power that keeps suns burning and worlds turning. How can He rest or we may ask, Does God get tired? Was He worn out when He finished creating the heavens and the earth? What kind of rest could He need or enjoy? We may wonder, but God asks some of these same questions.

In Isaiah He tells us to ponder: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest" (Isaiah 66:1)? Then to help us understand He proceeds to answer His question in the next verse. His place of rest is to be found in that one with a "poor and contrite spirit."

The Hebrew for this word "contrite" has a remarkable similarity to the description given of Jesus when we are told "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). A similar version is given by Paul as we are told to "think" like Jesus thought:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

"Contrite," "smitten," "humbled,"—here is the heart where God desired to rest. This was to be His abode in man. This was inherent in profound symbology as God called Israel to be His peculiar people saying: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

The mind of God was revealed as Isaiah records the question: "Where is the house that ye build unto me?" His desire was fixed. His people were called to respect His original intentions in giving them the earthly temple. It was a symbol and representation of the human heart. God could say with satisfaction, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," because Christ allowed the purpose of God to be fulfilled in Him (Matthew 3:17). And so God rested upon the seventh day as Genesis tells us. The entire creative endeavor culminated in the creation of one made in His image, after His likeness (Genesis 1:26).

The "finishing of the work" was when He took one of Adam's ribs and made the woman. Here is the first glimmer of the destiny of Christ's own bride, the church. In the most profound spiritual sense she is His "sabbath" and His sanctuary. She is to be His resting place.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-21).

What is this need that drives God to such sacrificial devotion? A 6000-year courtship of frustration and rejection! What hidden value does the repentant bride possess that only He can see? In full view of the universe she is the canvas upon which He can paint the reflections of His attributes. No celestial resume could adequately represent Him and dispel the doubts and accusations that have taunted Him since Lucifer's rebellion. She alone can open the chest of God and display the compassion and love that burns in His desire. She alone is the rib that rested in the cavity of His soul.

The truth stored up in His heart is like a seed waiting and ready to burst forth into life and radiant growth. Here in His innermost longings is the fruition of all the trials the human race has ever struggled with or the achievements they hoped to attain. Here the universe stands enthralled as they see the outworking of the mystery of godliness in human "flesh."

Weak, vacillating human beings in contrition and uncertainty are the medium through which He exhibits this mystery of godliness. The word of truth apart from such human passion and understanding is a sterile testimony in the environment of a cemetery. This deadly atmosphere has been the hallmark of those who failed to understand that "the Word was made flesh." It is the dead letter of pharisaism. The testimony of Jesus, God manifest in human flesh, the living Word, is the icon of heaven. The contrition and struggle to manifest this revelation to the universe is the desire of God's own heart. His "strength is made perfect in weakness," it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (2 Corinthians 12:9; Zechariah 4:6). The testimony is clear, that Spirit resides with the humble and contrite.

God does not need to prove the supremacy of His strength. He has every right to be omnipotent and omniscient. But Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself of no reputation and took on the form of a slave (Philippians 2:6, 7). His omniscience does not allow Him to coerce the minds of the universe looking on. Only when stripped of His power can He prove that sacrificial love is the basis of His government. Only when "made in the likeness of men" can He show the total power of righteousness. By humility and love He must conquer in the conflict that man would try to rule by force and reputation.

To avert the perjury of His enemies who exempt Him from His demonstration and victory in the weakness of the "flesh," He manifests the same truths in an irrefutable setting, even in His bride. But before she can be His bride, she must be His friend, and that entails far more than we or the onlooking universe have imagined.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you (John 15:13-15).

To be His friends we must know "all things." We must understand that which the Father gave to Him for us. A servant stands by, waiting for the Lord to do something. A servant does what is commanded. But a friend sees beyond any command. A friend seeks to understand the need. The servant only does as told, whereas the friend sees into the heart of his companion and knows without being prompted by demands.

But more than this, friendship is a risk. It entails a benevolent comprehension of mutual vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Insight in the hands of a friend is a great asset to the exposed party, for the friend not only serves in time of need but defends even weaknesses. Christ's weakness and vulnerability revolve around His "laying down His life for His friends". No one can aspire to fellowship with Him and "know not". It is the servant that "knoweth not," and so we must understand how much God has risked for our friendship. Such knowledge in the hands of the remnant will give power to defend and represent our Friend.

This friendship will culminate in the final judgment celebrated in the betrothal of Jesus and His people. They will "know" the secrets of a marriage consummated. Then sin will cease and the weight of mediation under which God has labored for 6000 years can end. *This is the rest God has longed to have.* This is the rest we can initiate for a Friend who is in need. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). God's people have heard about this wedding but they stand by waiting, undecided whether to take part and fill their proper role.

Like the people who waited for the flood in Noah's day and "knew not until the flood came," so we wait for the time of trouble and the close of probation and "know not" why there is this terrible delay. Modern ignorance has no virtue over ancient ignorance. The record sounds the dire warning that like the ignorance of Noah's day, they "knew not ... so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:39).

Every wedding requires some preparation, but the wedding of all time requires the ultimate in readiness. We catch a glimpse of God's view of this heaven-ordained union by looking at the first wedding on this planet.

In the book of beginnings is a key that unlocks God's own heart-longing. The first Adam, the reflected image of his Creator, was enjoined to name every creature. But before this the Lord had already acknowledged, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). So when the animals were brought before Adam, a desire was born in his heart that mirrored a divine aspiration made evident by his creation. Two by two those creatures were paraded before Adam until he could bear it no longer—something was missing. "There was not found an help meet for him." It was from this need that God's most beautiful creation came forth—woman, Adam's bride.

Somewhere upon the distant edge of eternity, this same need blossomed in the heart of the Almighty. Eve was to be Adam's equal, taken from his side. Equal, not in stature and physical might, but in her capacity to understand and share their lives in union. No other one in all creation could appreciate the wonder and compassion that swelled up in Adam's heart as he gazed upon the majestic creation laid at his feet by the Lord. Only Eve could bow in adoration and merge her spirit with his in love and contemplative appreciation and worship of the Creator.

So God has desired a bride with whom He could merge His infinite love, and who has the capacity to understand and appreciate Him. She would be one who would come to sense truth and justice to its full, and to whom the Creator could with complete confidence make known the mystery of godliness. But the terrible history of the last 6000 years is a record of mankind's betrayal and harlotry controlled by insatiable self-worship. With immeasurable longing God has sought to reveal His love to mankind. The loftiness of His sacred desire and planned destiny for His people is beyond our most penetrating dreams; it has not yet entered the heart of man.

While governments and corporate tycoons work unceasingly to gather vast amounts of money to satisfy and capitalize human pride to launch space probes and missions to planets afar, God longs to lay the universe at our feet. The cost? To understand the truth of the incarnation. The universe stands amazed at our ingratitude and our mental block. The summation of His desire for His bride and her planned destiny was made known when "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," born in a stable (Galatians 4:4)- Nearly two millenniums ago Jesus came and lived, and realized the divine dreams that for so long had lain dormant and broken. In Him the bride can see her potential destiny realized. In the incarnation is to be found man's destiny made visible, and to understand this mystery is to fathom God's purposes in creating Adam and Eve.

The Groom is waiting, the guests are invited, where is the bride?

The Father is infinitely grieved when we interpret the Saviour's birth, life and death, as merely some means to compensate for the fall of man and his sinful rebellion. The incarnation must be understood as a cosmic promise and the desire of God Himself calling us, as a corporate body, to a destiny beyond our most profound dreams. Merged with Him through His infinite love He will have a bride that comprehends "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of His love and "be filled with all the fulness of God," and she will be like Him (Ephesians 3:18,19).

For this purpose He was "made like unto His brethren."

Appendix

“TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS LIKE AS WE ARE”

Mrs E. G. White

"In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

Christ came to this world, and clothed His divinity with humanity, taking upon Him the nature of man. He came to pass through the experiences of humanity, to pass over the ground on which Adam had fallen, to redeem his failure, to meet and conquer the adversary of God and man, that through His grace man might be an overcomer, and finally have a place with Him upon His throne. ...

Christ came to represent the character of His father, to win man back to his allegiance to God, to reconcile man to God. ...

He came to unite man with God, to impart divine strength to the repenting soul, and from the manger to Calvary to pass over the path which man would travel, at every step giving man a perfect example of what he should do, presenting in His character what humanity might become when united with divinity.

But many say that Jesus was not like us, that He was not as we are in the world, that He was divine, and therefore we cannot overcome as He overcame. But this is not true; "for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. ... Christ knows the sinner's trials; He knows his temptations. He took upon Himself our nature; He was tempted in all points like as we are. He has wept, He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. As a man He lived upon the earth. As a man He ascended to heaven. As a man He is the substitute of humanity. As a man He liveth to make intercession for us. As a man He will come again with kingly power and glory to receive those who love Him, and for whom He is now preparing a place. We should rejoice and give thanks that God "hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained."

Those who claim that it was not possible for Christ to sin, cannot believe that He took upon Him human nature. Christ was actually tempted, not only in the wilderness, but all through His life. In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation in every form, He gave us a perfect example. Through the ample provisions made in our behalf, we may become partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Jesus says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." This, the beginning of our confidence, we must hold steadfastly unto the end. Jesus can enable us to resist Satan's temptations; for He came to bring divine power to combine with human effort.

Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." He speaks of Himself as well as the Father when He speaks of omnipotent power, and claims for Himself perfect righteousness. In Christ dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily. This is why, although tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world untainted by the corruptions that surrounded Him. We also are to become partakers of that fulness, and only in this way shall we be enabled to overcome as Christ overcame.—*The Bible Echo*, Vol. 7, No. 21, Nov. 1, 1892; republished in, Ellen G. White *Periodical Resource Collection*, Volume 1, p. 367.

“THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS”

Mrs E. G. White

The great work of redemption could be carried out by the Redeemer only as He took the place of fallen man. Burdened with the sins of the world, He must pass over the path where Adam fell, and redeem his failure. When Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him, but he was surrounded by the glories of Eden. But it was not thus with Jesus; for, bearing the infirmities of degenerate humanity, He entered the wilderness to cope with the mighty foe, that He might lift man up from the lowest depths of his degradation. Alone He was to tread the path of temptation and exercise self-control stronger than hunger, ambition, or death. ...

The followers of Christ are called upon to share with Him in his sufferings. The confederacy of evil is arrayed against those who would follow in the footsteps of the world's Redeemer. We are to battle with the mighty prince of evil; but the Saviour tells us that we are not to fight alone. All the heavenly intelligences will come to our help. Amid the darkness of the world, we are to catch the radiance from the throne of God, and to shed the light of heaven to the uttermost parts of the earth.—*The Bible Echo*, Vol. 7, No. 22, Nov. 15, 1892; *Ibid.* p. 368.