

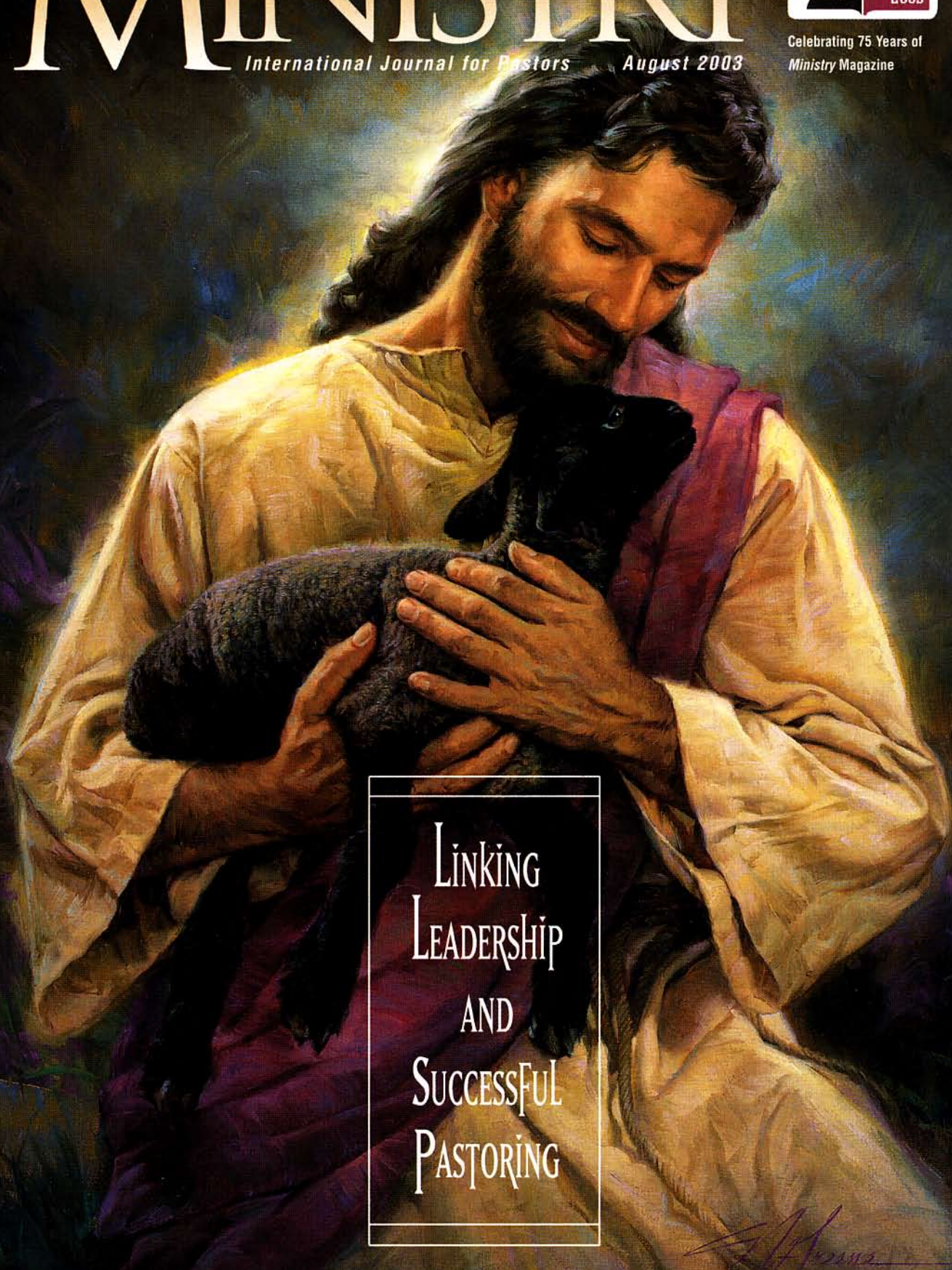
MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

August 2003



Celebrating 75 Years of
Ministry Magazine



LINKING
LEADERSHIP
AND
SUCCESSFUL
PASTORING

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Circulation queries, subscription renewals, address changes (use either Email address):

Email: MinistryRenewals@triad.rr.com

ministrysubscriptions@gc.adventist.org

Fax: 301-680-6502

Phone: 301-680-6510

To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Editorial preference is to receive manuscripts on diskette with name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and Social Security number (if U.S. citizen or possessing a U.S. Social Security number). Send editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Phone: 301-680-6510; fax: 301-680-6502; Email: norcottj@gc.adventist.org or drapers@gc.adventist.org (editorial offices).

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THE WRITER ACCUSED EDWARDS OF POOR SCHOLARSHIP BECAUSE HE MADE REFERENCES TO AUTHORS PUBLISHED TOO MANY YEARS AGO.

In the April 2003 edition of *Ministry*, a letter to the editor appeared objecting to Rex Edwards's article "Spiritual Leadership or Baptized Secularism," which appeared in the September 2002 issue.

The writer accused Edwards of poor scholarship because he made references to authors published too many years ago. I carefully looked at Edwards's 17 references [a number of other similar references were excluded in the editing process, to conserve space] and found one from 1987, five from 1993, and one from 1997. The writer quoted an author by the name of Bartol, but didn't mention the title of the book or the publisher, so I was unable to check the context from which the quotation was drawn.

I'm not sure that the three styles of leadership, autocratic, laissez-faire, and democratic, are from the dinosaur age, even though they originated in 1938, as the letter writer claimed. One has only to visit churches and speak to pastors to discover that all three styles of leadership are still being practiced.

The letter writer's quotation listed cooperation, partnership, and consensus as more contemporary views of leadership. When I read Edwards's article I noticed that he advocates all three of these; besides, all three are included in the democratic style.

I co-lectured with Rex Edwards in Professional Growth Seminars for many years. Pastors from many faiths expressed great appreciation for his cur-

rent scholarship and practical material. It would seem to me that along with this very negative letter to the editor Rex Edwards should have the opportunity to reply. [See below.] This practice is very noticeable in Adventist journals such as *Adventist Review* and *Signs*. Such a reply could very well clear the air for the letter writer.

—Larry Yeagley, Charlotte, Michigan.

Thanks for the great job you are doing with *Ministry*!

Having been in leadership training on six continents for a number of years, I can't help but respond to Rex Edwards's article, "Spiritual Leadership or Baptized Secularism," and particularly to Keith Howson's response.

"A rose by any other name smells as sweet." That famous line by Shakespeare can well apply to Rex's article. Sure it's always good to use current authors as Edwards does (Kouzes and Posner, Shawchuck and Heuser and Mullins), but to blast the whole article on the basis of older quotes seems unfair, and I'll tell you why. Incidentally, I have even quoted Socrates and Plato on a couple of good points.

The oldest quote of all was from Scripture. Yes, of course, inspired men wrote those words, but the principles hold no matter the date of writing. Take a look at Nehemiah, Peter, and Edwards—they all described the detrimental effects of leadership by lordship. Nehemiah said, "Out of reverence

for God, I did not act like that" (Neh. 5:15, NIV). That's what Peter and Edwards did.

Isn't it true that the autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire styles of leadership [still] exist today in the church, no matter when the terms were first used? Edwards expounds on the democratic, developmental style that he espouses. He bridges the gap between the past and the present in understandable language that shapes his underlying thesis. Howson's quote (2001 by Bartol) about "cooperation, partnership, and consensus" is up-to-date, but no more valid than the comparable words of John Stott or my friend Ted Engstrom. So, let's be careful about our judgment of others.

Right, "a rose by any other name smells as sweet."

—Donald G. Reynolds, Mount Vernon, Ohio.

Rex Edwards replies: As I read Mr. Howson's critique of my article "Spiritual Leadership or Baptized Secularism," I thought of a line that Shakespeare put into the mouth of Julius Caesar, to wit: "What you have said, I will consider; what you have to say, I will with patience hear; and find a time both meet to hear and answer."

Let me preface my response by saying that I was motivated to write "Spiritual Leadership or Baptized Secularism" because leadership malpractice is unfortunately still widespread
continued on page 8

Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.

Old issues ongoing

Along with Christians since the first century, Seventh-day Adventists have had their struggles with the question of what kind of nature Jesus took when He, "the Word," became "flesh" (John 1:14). Our question has been, To what extent and in which ways did Jesus possess a sinful human nature versus a sinless divine nature, and how do these two natures meet in Him and relate to human salvation?

The soul mate of the "nature-of-Christ" issue (at least when it comes to the Adventist dialogue over these things) is the question, of course, of the role of Christ's imparted sinless perfection, worked out in the heart and behavior of the Christian believer by faith, versus the role of Jesus' own personal perfection, "credited to the account" of the Christian by faith (imputed), through an outright gift of God's grace. These particular issues and the way they relate to one another, are particularly potent in the Adventist mind and heart when coupled with the close of "probation," the final judgment, and the second coming of Christ.

Seventh-day Adventists, many at least, are divided when it comes to these things. While there is a profound fatigue within the Adventist soul when it comes to such discussions and the tensions and divisions they tend to bring, there is also a compelling significance to aspects of the dialogue. The publication of two articles in this Journal have and will inevitably raise questions about these things among some of our readers.

First, there is Roy Naden's doctrinal study, "The Nature of Christ: Four Measures of a Mystery." Then there is Woodrow Whidden's important article in this issue, reporting and commenting on the republication of the book *Questions on Doctrine*.

Given these articles, we felt it would

WILL EVA



be both helpful and interesting to republish an insert (found at the center of this issue) that *Ministry* first presented 33 years ago in its October 1970 issue.

While volumes of water have passed under the theological bridge of our Church since 1970, we at *Ministry* find ourselves in basic agreement with the positions that were taken on the issues discussed by the three essayists in this insert. For instance, both the collection and especially the correlation of Ellen White citations found on and around page 12 of the insert are some of the most well-balanced and revealing that could be presented.

Even when these are carefully placed next to similar statements that emphasize other important aspects of these matters, they stand as sentinels unabashedly affirming the absolute sinlessness of the human nature of Jesus Christ, who as such is both qualified and entitled to stand before God in our behalf, so that in Him we may have a well founded confidence before God (1 John 2:28), even after the close of "probation" and at the moment of final judgment.

On the other hand, in this insert there is much to substantiate the superb truth that Jesus, as a through-and-through human being, facing all the temptations common to humans,

and living each day with *our* fallen human nature upon Him, demonstrated that through faith in His Father, sin could by all means be overcome, and so verified that, through the inner work of the Holy Spirit, every struggling Christian may do as He did, in the way He did it.

Yet it is important to clarify that when all this has been done in the life of the Christian, the resulting goodness, having passed through a defective human channel, can be acceptable only when hidden by faith in the absolute perfection of Jesus Himself (see, for example, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 344). This is and indeed must be, because His nature is and was completely sinless.

It seems to me that one of the greatest challenges in all this is to embrace the fact that, regardless of where we stand in any dialogue, there is a defiantly frustrating mystery to Jesus' nature. This is especially so when we seek to understand its finer implications.

For example, none of us has had, and therefore cannot know what it really means to have a divine side, as such, to our natures, whether quiescent or not. Further, it is clear that Jesus was born and came to this earth under entirely unique circumstances, different from ours, and therefore received a one-of-a-kind nature, the Holy Spirit being as literally His progenitor for His human incarnational sojourn as human words could ever describe such a reality (Luke 1:35).

But when all is said and done, the evidence, experience, and also the quality of the Seventh-day Adventists that form the ecclesiastical fault lines composing the sides in our struggle over these questions, are such that it is crucial for us to cease considering someone less than authentically Christian or Adventist if they take a position different from the one we take. ■

Linking leadership and successful pastoring: An investigation

Roger Dudley and Skip Bell



Roger Dudley, Ed.D., is director of the Institute of Church Ministry, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan



Skip Bell, D.Min., is associate professor of church leadership and director of the Doctor of Ministry program, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Do leadership practices correlate with successful pastoral ministry? We ask this question because we frequently notice that, while programs and resources vary and change, progress seems to be a constant with certain pastors.

What empowers these church leaders to continue with unusual success, even when their ministry context or emphasis changes? The question becomes more complex when we consider that people equally devoted to Jesus, seem to experience differing levels of success; thus suggesting that it is difficult to conclude that spiritual commitment alone is the factor that predicts pastoral success as we customarily define it.

Is leadership practice, rather than particular programs or resources, the “constant” that accompanies pastoral success?

Success criteria for pastoral ministry

Such questions require agreement regarding the criteria composing pastoral success. Achieving such agreement is an ambitious pursuit. The conversations and perspectives of varied constituencies of the church must be assimilated, objective analysis provided, and a set of criteria put forward.

We have identified a set of criteria for qualifying success in pastoral ministry through interviews with pastors, members, and church administrators, a focus group composed of

ministerial secretaries, a survey of 62 members of eight conference executive committees in various regions of the North American Division, and a review of church-growth literature. Thirty-four of the respondents to the aforementioned 62-person conference executive committee survey, were not church employees or ministry professionals, 11 were pastors, 17 were administrators.

Analysis of the above-mentioned research steps¹ led us to establish the following set of criteria for measuring pastoral success:

1. The growth of the church.
2. The motivation and development of members in ministry.
3. Effective communication of the Word of God.
4. Effective soul-winning ministry.
5. A compelling, well-communicated, inspiring vision for growth.
6. Inspiring worship services.
7. Spiritual strength in personal and family life.
8. A ministry that contributes to unity in the church.
9. A ministry that builds trust among constituents.
10. A ministry that multiplies loving relationships in the church.
11. Attendance increases.
12. Giving patterns that are improving.
13. The ability of the church to sustain healthy growth.

A framework of leadership practices

The opening questions, identified above, also require that a cluster, or “framework,” of leadership practices be defined. A practice is a recurring pattern of behavior predictable within a person in response to a certain environment. In the case of pastoral leadership practices, it is the dominant way a person thinks, feels, or acts in an environment that evokes pastoral leadership behaviors.

Innumerable systems exist for the construction of a leadership practice framework. We referenced a framework with five practices applicable to church leadership—the research from TGP/Learning Systems founded by Jim Kouzes and Tom Peters.

Five key leadership practices make up the Kouzes-Posner leadership framework: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart.² This leadership frame-

TABLE 1: Comparisons of "Average" and "Successful" Pastors on Five Leadership Practices

Leadership Practice	Mean of "Average" Pastors	Mean of "Successful Pastors	
Challenging the Process	35.4 (59%)	43.0 (72%)	.001*
Inspiring a Shared Vision	37.7 (63%)	45.1 (75%)	.001*
Enabling Others to Act	41.5 (69%)	47.5 (79%)	.001*
Modeling the Way	39.7 (66%)	45.5 (76%)	.013*
Encouraging the Heart	38.7 (65%)	45.7 (76%)	.001*
Combined Leadership Practices	190.3	228.0	.001*

**Probability that the differences in the two samples result from chance. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest tenth of a percentage point.*

work has been assessed in numerous studies with an instrument known as the Leadership Practices Inventory, which has been used in several studies of church organizations.³

The research samples

To investigate possible correlation between leadership practices and successful pastoral ministry, we had to secure two sample groups of pastors distinguished by this set of criteria, one group representing distinctive success and the other a more average norm. To achieve this in our study, we selected a purposive sample of 23 conferences in the NAD. We sent a list of the pastoral success criteria to the ministerial secretary of each of

these conferences. Each of them was asked to list five pastors in that conference who significantly fitted the success criteria, and randomly select five pastors who would represent an average performance under this standard.

Sixteen conferences responded, sending 66 names for those recommended as meeting the success criteria, and 56 as representing the average. We then examined conference directories and identified congregational leadership lists for each congregation served by a pastor named on either list. From these we selected three lay leaders from each congregation. We mailed the assessment tool, the 30-item Leadership

Practices Inventory for "Observers," to each lay leader along with a letter including these instructions: "Your pastor has been selected to be part of a research project of leadership practices among Seventh-day Adventist pastors across North America.

"As a leader in your local congregation, your help is needed for this project. Included in this envelope you will find a Leadership Practices Inventory survey called 'Observer' with instructions on the front cover . . . as well as a self-addressed, postage-paid, return envelope. We are asking that you simply fill out the survey according to the instructions and return it in the envelope provided."

The lay member was also informed that "all responses are anonymous and highly confidential, so please do not discuss this survey with anyone." Thus, the pastors were not aware that lay leaders were rating them.

Analysis


We received 199 usable surveys, evaluating 109 pastors.⁴ These data consist of 120 responses on 62 pastors from the "success" group, and 79 responses on 47 in the "average" group. Each pastor received a score on the five leadership practices, with a maximum score of 60. These data were analyzed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program for the difference between two independent means. An average score for each group of pastors on each of the five leadership practices is shown in Table 1. The percentage

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next to the average score is that of the average score compared to the total possible score of 60. The average scores for the combined five practices are also shown.

In every case the mean score of the "successful" pastors is significantly higher than the mean score of the "average" group. Statisticians generally accept the .05 level or lower as indicating a significant difference between two groups. This indicates that there are fewer than five chances in a hundred that these differences could be obtained if there were no real differences in the population group (all NAD pastors) from which these samples were drawn.

In four of the five differences the level is .001. This indicates that only one chance in a thousand exists that these groups are not really different. The one exception is in the "Modeling the Way" category. Even here the .013 level indicates that only about thirteen chances in a thousand could yield these results if no difference actually existed.

Furthermore, if we combine all the practices into one super-leadership scale, we find an average mean of about 228 for the "success" group of pastors and only about 190 for the "average" group. Adventist pastors who meet the success criteria adopted are significantly more likely (.001 level) to be rated higher on leadership skills than pastors whose performance is considered average.

On each of the five leadership practices (Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart) the pastors who qualified under the "success" criteria were significantly higher than the pastors who formed the "average" group. This was also true when all five practices were combined into a "super-leadership-practice" scale.

While this relationship does not prove that one causes the other, it seems that applying superior leadership practices enables pastors to be more successful. This study has



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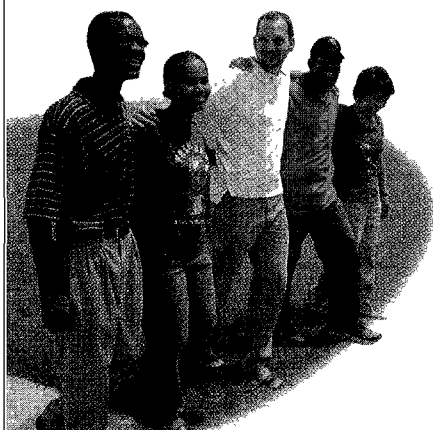


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demonstrated a strong correlation between the two.

The priority of leadership development

One subjective observation seems evident: Investment in leadership development must become a priority. Leadership development itself is frequently misunderstood. While it is beyond the limitation of this report to prescribe a leadership development process, we must define the terms of this observation.

While there are by all means indefinable, subjective elements that underlie the persona of successful leaders, professionals who devote their careers to adult professional education in the field of leadership describe the process on at least three levels: (1) personal identification and formation, which certainly incorporates spiritual formation; (2) understanding and developing leadership practices, often cast as traits; and (3) skill formation, including administrative competencies.

Leadership development is an ongoing, intentional, and enduring process. It is not communicated in seminars alone, nor in occasional inspirational messages. The encouraging reality is that leadership practices can be developed and can grow out of significant personal and spiritual transformation.

Thus, it would not only be wise but imperative to devote considerable attention in graduate ministerial education and in lifelong continuing education to develop and inculcate effective leadership practices within the members of our pastoral family at large. ■

1 See Andrews University Seminary Studies, Volume 40, number 2, Fall 2002, for a technical report and complete data.

2 The framework, published in *The Leadership Challenge*, has been validated consistently in over ten years of research (James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995]).

3 One such notable work is the Ph.D. dissertation of T. D. Zook, "An Examination of Leadership Practices in Large Protestant Congregations" (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1993).

4 In addition to the 199 "usable" surveys, we also

received eight that were discarded due to various problems, three that were returned with a refusal to participate, 14 that were returned as undeliverable, and two that arrived after the cut-off date. There were 122 congregations identified, with the survey being sent to three lay members per church—or 366 total surveys. If we eliminate the 14 "undeliverables," 352 are presumed to have reached their destination. If we add the 199 usable surveys, the eight with problems, and the two that were late, the total of returned surveys equals 209. This represents 59 percent of the 352 that were presumably delivered.

Letters *continued from page 3*

today in our churches, far more than we are willing to admit. We might complain at times about church leadership and its shortcomings, but have we developed a theology of leadership for ourselves? Can we as the people of God establish a common understanding of leadership in spite of our theological and philosophical differences?

My specific response to Howson is threefold:

First, *integrity*: In my article, 17 quotations were cited, of which 9 are from the pen of contemporary authors, of whom Shawchuck, Kouzes, and Posner are internationally recognized leadership authorities. An honest critique would not have been unfairly selective by ignoring the latest contemporary citations quoted. Howson's approach is either willful misrepresentation or shabby scholarship.

Second, *objectivity*: Admittedly, I was using a dated construct, but that is not a sound enough reason to dismiss it. The three models are still relevant. Howson's preoccupation with citation dates is to the neglect of evaluating the stated descriptors. We all might have benefited if he had set forth an alternate leadership model.

Third, *continuity*: The threefold model I cited and which was categorized by Howson as imprecise and dinosaurial, is expanded in a precise sixfold model by a "contemporary" writer and professor at Rutgers University, Dr. Daniel Goleman, in an article entitled "Leadership That Gets Results," in *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 2000). Summarily:

(1) There are *coercive* leaders who demand immediate compliance. (2) There is *authoritative* leadership, which tends to mobilize people toward a vision, especially when confusion and insecurity prevail. If this style is too defensive, it tends to become coercive in practice. (3) There is *affiliative* leadership, which does not say, "Do what I say!" but rather "People come first." This leader places priority on the values and feelings of others rather than on tasks and goals. (4) There is the *democratic* style of leadership, which is an excellent approach when there is time for consensus building, and to discuss the options before a decision needs to be made. This type, however, can be abused by endless meetings and leaders who defer to crucial decision making. (5) There is also the *pacesetter* style of leadership, whereby the head of the organization expects excellence and self-direction that points to high standards. (6) The *coaching* style, within which one acts as a counselor more than a professor or administrator, listening

carefully and with a sense of genuine concern to help others see change as an opportunity for growth.

Goleman carefully elaborates the strengths and shortcomings of each of these styles. Has Goleman resurrected the "dinosaur" with this precise categorization of leadership styles?

If the *Harvard Business Review* article had been available at the time of my submission, it would have been referenced along with an elaboration of the valuable lessons to be learned from each style. Notwithstanding, it is clear that while we can learn from secular leadership models, as spiritual leaders we need to switch flexibly among and practice those leadership styles that are in keeping with our faith principles and informed by the Holy Spirit.

Christian leadership is complex, and there is no single theological formula or infallible guru we can study and emulate as we navigate through the leadership challenges. We should wrestle honestly with the question of effective and ineffective leadership, to

dig more deeply into our traditions for examples, and through a process of dialog to shape new paradigms of leadership to empower the people of God into a renewed partnership with God. Clergy and laity need a shared vision, a common apostolate—that is to say, a common calling and commissioning to go forth together as God's people who are interdependent.

I regard feedback as a gift from which I can learn. But I would remind Howson that articles are not submitted to *Ministry* as class assignments or exercises, and the magazine is not a refereed journal. I was offering only one perspective on spiritual leadership. However, his critique will serve a useful purpose if it motivates *Ministry* readers to re-read my article, judge its fairness and objectivity—or lack of it—re-evaluate their own leadership style, and develop a viable theology of leadership themselves. ■

—Rex Edwards, associate vice president and director of religious studies, Griggs University, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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of Belief #9: *The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. "In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. (John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10, Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11.)*

The good news of Scripture centers in the reality that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). Because of "the great love with which he loved us" (Eph. 2:4, NRSV) He has become "the God of our salvation" (1 Chr. 16:35; Ps. 79:9). As the Savior He calls all humanity to turn to Him and be saved (Isa. 45:22). In response we can affirm: "But as for me, I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (Mic. 7:7, RSV).

When the budding Israelite nation was in slavery in Egypt, God heard their cry (Exod. 2:23, 24) and, with a mighty hand, brought them out to freedom (Deut. 26:8). The Exodus was the greatest salvation event prior to the coming of Christ as Messiah. Its themes are woven into the description of salvation

IVAN T. BLAZEN



history throughout the Old Testament. It explained Israel's past, gave meaning to its present, and inspired hope for its future.

What the Exodus was to the Old Testament, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are to the New. These interrelated events cast their salvific radiance over all time. In Jesus a new exodus occurs. An exodus from sin and guilt, evil and suffering, the demonic, and even death itself.

The expression "God our Saviour," found in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10) is an appropriate title for God since it sums up the whole history of His saving activity in behalf of His people. Significantly, a parallel to this phrase in the Pastoral Epistles is the expression "Jesus our Saviour" (Titus 1:4). This juxtaposition reveals that what God does redemptively, He does primarily in Jesus. Jesus embodies God's saving purpose.

Jesus: the divine and the human

Jesus' earthly life is framed on both sides by divine events and meanings. Mark begins the story of Jesus with His baptism, when He was empowered by God's Spirit and identified as God's Son. Matthew and Luke begin with Jesus' virgin birth by the action of the Spirit. John traces Jesus' origin to His preexistence as the Word in the eternal realm

of God. On the other side of Jesus' earthly life is His resurrection from the dead and ascent to the Father.

It is clear that while Jesus was a real human being, He was no ordinary person. The one who walked the hills of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem, who healed the sick and challenged religious authority and imperial power by giving new status to the oppressed, and who was crucified by Pontius Pilate and died as a criminal—this was the Son of God who stood in a special relation to both God and humanity.

He was the eternal Word made flesh, the supreme revelation of the nature and purpose, love and grace of God. When He spoke, He spoke with divine authority. When He acted, He brought divine intervention in behalf of a lost and struggling humanity.

He died as a result of religious politics and Roman power, but it was no ordinary death. In the biblical witness, He died for our sins as our Representative and Substitute and as an atoning Sacrifice through which forgiveness of sin and newness of life are granted.

In His death and resurrection He was victor over the forces of evil and the dominion of death. Through union with Him as the resurrected Lord, this victory is ours. Until the day He comes again, when every knee bows and confesses Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father, it is our privilege to already call Him Savior and Lord, and to accept His gift and receive His summons, "Come and follow Me."

The invitation of Jesus

In a pithy summary of the essence of Jesus' teaching ministry, Mark 1:14, 15 says that Jesus entered Galilee with a threefold announcement.

First, "the time is fulfilled." This statement must have sent shivers up the spiritual spines of His hearers, for they

had waited long for the fulfillment of their messianic, eschatological hope of redemption. Jesus announces here that their wait is over. Something of greatest magnitude, to which the Old Testament gave witness, is about to be disclosed and revealed.

Second, Jesus gives specific form to the time of fulfillment by declaring that "the kingdom of God is at hand." To speak of God's kingdom is to refer to the reign, or rule, of God. In other words, God, as Creator, is about to assert His power to rule by intervening in human history to deliver His people.

This kingdom is both present and future. In the Lord's Prayer we are to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10), and when it does come at the return of the Son of man in glory, we are to enter it (Matt. 25:31-34).

And yet, the kingdom is present, for Jesus declared that it had drawn near (Mark 1:15), could be entered now (Luke 16:16; Matt. 21:31), and was present to His contemporaries in His presence, words, and deeds (Luke 17:21) as witnessed, for example, by His exorcism of demons by the power of God (Luke 11:20).

The third element of Jesus' proclamation was "Repent and believe the gospel." The right response to the good news of what God offers through Jesus is faith and repentance. God's kingdom does not come upon us by force but as an appeal to make a decision for God, to say Yes to Him, receive what He has for us, and allow His rule to be manifested in our lives.

Repentance has various connotations, depending on whether it is understood in terms of Greek or Hebrew thought patterns. The basic meaning of the Greek word *metanoeo*, which is used in Mark 1:15, is to change one's mind. This fits well with the Greek emphasis on intellect.

While this idea is a component of repentance, it does not do justice to the dynamic Hebrew concept that lies behind the Greek form of the word. In Hebrew the concept of repentance comes from a term that means "to turn," and hence "to return." In this

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There is hope in the Word

arena, "to repent" means to do an about face in the way one has been walking through life and to come back to God and His will. It is a complete redirection of one's life in which the will and way of God become paramount and determinative. It is synonymous with conversion.

The idea is well represented in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. We are told that when he had wasted his inheritance on immoral living and found himself feeding pigs and hungering for their food, he came to his wits (verse 17) and said, "I will get up and go to my father" (verse 18). This is the same as saying, "I will go back to my father."

Sorrow and confession are part of this movement back as illustrated by the prodigal's words to his father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (verse 21). With such a repentance, the outcome is certain.

Compassion and restoration by the father take place. So with the heavenly Father, who calls to us in the words of

Joel: "Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing" (Joel 2:12, 13, NRSV).

When Jesus summons people to turn back to God and His rulership, the certainty of God's compassion and forgiveness is inherent in the call.

The character of Jesus' ministry

The character of Jesus' ministry and the practical significance of the kingdom of God are enhanced in His Nazareth sermon in Luke 4:16-21. Jesus takes on Himself the mantle of the Servant of God in Isaiah 61:1, 2. As the Servant, and in fulfillment of the Isaiah passage, He says that the Spirit of God anointed Him to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim release to the captives and oppressed, renewed sight to the

blind, and the year of the Lord's favor.

The two main themes involved in this mission are freedom and grace—freedom from whatever holds us in its thrall, and the grace of God's acceptance, for which the time is entirely open with the present arrival of Jesus. It is significant that Jesus did not continue the quotation from Isaiah with the words that immediately follow: "and the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus throws all His emphasis onto grace. Vengeance is not the point for now. Acceptance alone is in His mind. He wants every bonded soul to know that he or she can be a part of God's kingdom and have a new, grace-filled relationship with God.

There are seven "Jesus came" statements in the gospels, which indicate what the purpose of Jesus' mission was. Nearly all these are in line with Jesus' emphasis on God's favor and acceptance in His Nazareth sermon. The gospels declare that Jesus came to:

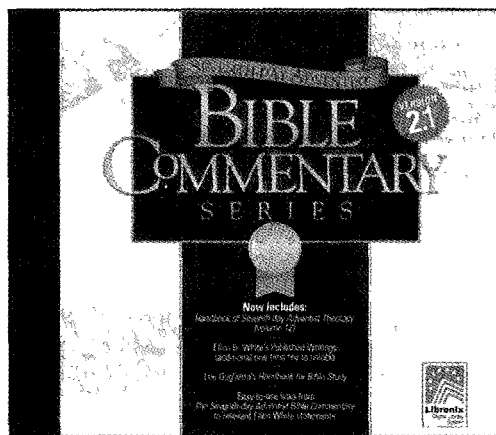
1. Expound God's law more fully (Matt. 5:17, a verse that is expounded more fully in 5:21-48);
2. Seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10);
3. Call sinners rather than the righteous (Matt. 9:13);
4. Be a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 11:19);
5. Save rather than condemn the world (John 3:17);
6. Give life more abundantly (John 10:10);
7. Minister, rather than to be ministered to, and to give His life a ransom for people (Mark 10:45).

Jesus' death and resurrection

The last statement brings us to the point of Jesus' death. It was a death expressing self-giving love. Jesus' intent was not to have others serve Him but to serve them.

In this, one is reminded of the moving statement of American President John F. Kennedy 2,000 years later, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." The same principle is involved but, in Jesus' case, He was not talking about

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others giving themselves, but about offering Himself. And it was not a general statement about a life of service, but a focused statement about giving Himself up to death for others.

What His death would do for others is indicated by the word *ransom*, which is a reference to giving that which frees others who cannot free themselves. In this case, by giving His life, Jesus liberates others to live. This is not cheap grace, for "You were ransomed . . . not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18, 19, RSV).

The same emphasis is found in the scene of the Last Supper where, in reference to the bread and wine, Jesus states: "This is my body which is given for you . . . my blood which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Thinking of death as bringing life, I cannot forget the words of a now aged survivor of the Holocaust during World War II. He described how, as a young boy, he was fortuitously quartered in the same barracks as his father. The ration of bread was pitifully meager—hardly enough for one to survive, but day by day his father gave his bread to his son. As a result, the father grew weaker and weaker and finally died. In his lecture the son tearfully explained, "My father gave his life for me."

The ransom theme of Mark 10:45 and the body and blood motifs of the Last Supper are developed in other New Testament writings. In Romans 3:24, Paul declares that our justification takes place through an act of redemption, a term in the same word family as *ransom*.

This means that we are put right with God through a divine act of liberation from sin. This occurred when God set forth Christ as an atoning Sacrifice, through which our sin was purged and God's holy wrath and universal justice were obviated, it being initiated by God Himself as an act of His own redemptive, merciful, and inexpressibly loving nature.

All this had as its purpose to exhibit God's saving righteousness, by which He restores us to a right relationship with Himself. Indeed, in an act of ulti-

mate identification (3:25), God "for our sake, made [Christ] to be sin [the sin bearer] for us, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21, RSV).

This is the great exchange; He takes our sin and we receive His righteousness. This righteousness involves our reconciliation to God, for, as the same context makes clear, "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19, RSV).

The Christ who was put to death to deal with our sins was raised in order to effect our justification (Rom. 4:25). A dead Savior cannot save. As His resurrection vindicated Him, so it justifies us. Without the Resurrection, the apostolic proclamation and our faith would be in vain, we would remain in our sins, and the dead would have forever perished (1 Cor. 15:17, 18).

The significance of Christ's resurrection

However, if Christ be risen, the results are of an altogether different kind. Because Jesus lives, all who belong to Him will be made alive (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and the universal dominion of God will be realized (24-29). God's people will be transformed into the image of the resurrected Christ (42-50), and immortality will be granted (51-55). In view of this, it can be readily seen why the resurrection of Christ, along with His death, is called a matter of "first importance" (3).

But it is not alone for the future that Jesus' resurrection has consummate significance. It has profound ramifications for the present as well. In contrast to the preaching and faith that become vain if the Resurrection is not true (1 Cor. 15:14), Paul asserts that the continuing life of Jesus guarantees that "in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (58). In other words, abounding in the work of Christ will find fruition instead of futility. What we do for Him counts permanently.

Furthermore, when we not only work for Christ but suffer for Him, we learn that we are not to "rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" (2 Cor.

1:9). Our confidence is that by the power of His resurrection He will carry us through. This is illustrated in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11, where the Cross stands for the negative side of life, and the Resurrection represents the power of God, which carries us through darkness.

The Cross—the Resurrection. We are afflicted in every way—but not crushed. Perplexed—but not driven to despair. Persecuted—but not forsaken. Struck down—but not destroyed. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus—so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake—so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.

Thus the power of the Resurrection is operative not only at the end of time but in the midst of time. We can know that "he who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again" (2 Cor 1:10, RSV).

Furthermore, the resurrection of Jesus makes possible in the present the ethical renewal of the believer. For as those baptized into Christ, we were baptized into His death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory (power) of God, we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4). The same power that raised Christ is operative in the moral life of those who are in union with Him.

In view of all that the death and resurrection of Jesus means and brings, and in view of so great a salvation, we can exclaim with Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (Peter 1:3-5, NRSV). ■

Ivan T. Blazen, Ph.D., is professor of religion, Faculty of Religion, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Questions on Doctrine: Then and now

Woodrow W.
Whidden



Woodrow W. Whidden, Ph.D., is professor of religion at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Andrews University Press recently released a new edition of the groundbreaking 1957 book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.¹ While the original turned out to be a watershed factor when it came to Seventh-day Adventist/Evangelical relations, it also proved to be one of the most controversial publishing events in the history of Adventism.

Before we further describe the background events and controversies surrounding QOD's (*Questions on Doctrine's*) original publication, and assess the ongoing impact of the publication, prospective readers will be interested in a number of the helpful features included in the new edition.

Features in the new edition

First, the original text is retained. However, the book has been editorially supplemented with an introduction, annotated footnotes, and an updated bibliography by well-known Adventist historian and writer George R. Knight.

Drawing on the latest QOD research, the introduction and footnotes provide background on the central theological issues, key conferees, and serious reactions provoked by the book from within both the evangelical and the Adventist communities.

Second, Knight has sought to honestly and fairly review the controversial charges and

countercharges the book generated between leading Adventist QOD contributors and those who took strong exception to their "answers" (especially on the atonement and the humanity of Christ).

The traditional critics of QOD will be gratified to know that Knight has pulled no punches, especially when it comes to exposing the way L. E. Froom and his colleagues were "less than transparent" about the denomination's long-held (since the 1890s) consensus on the "post-Fall" humanity of Christ. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Knight also suggests that Froom and his colleagues gave a false impression as they developed the notorious "Appendix B," entitled "Christ's Nature During the Incarnation," which consists of Ellen White statements.

Knight claims that the controversial heading, which says Christ "Took Sinless Human Nature," was "problematic in that it implied that this was Ellen White's idea when in fact she was quite emphatic in repeatedly stating that Christ took 'our sinful nature' and that 'He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin.'"²

Key background issues and personalities

The publication of QOD in 1957 was the culmination of a series of conversations held between conservative evangelicals and SDA leaders from March 1955 into 1956. The main evangelicals were Donald Grey Barnhouse, radio preacher and editor of *Eternity*, and Walter Martin, a young researcher. The Adventist conferees included noted historical theologian Leroy Edwin Froom, W. E. Read (a General Conference Field Secretary), and Roy Allan Anderson, prominent evangelist and editor of *Ministry*.

One of the positive results of the dialogue was that Barnhouse and Martin declared Seventh-day Adventists to be bona fide Christians who should not be considered to be cultish. This affirmative reassessment of Adventism came after these leaders became satisfied with the Adventist answers given to questions that addressed four key perceptions of Adventist teaching:

1. That Adventists did not believe that the atonement was completed at the cross;
2. That salvation is gained by faith through grace, plus works of the law;
3. That Jesus was a created being and did

not co-exist with the Father from all eternity past;

4. And that Christ partook of humanity's sinful, fallen nature at the Incarnation.

The forthright answers given by the Adventist conferees on the Trinity and salvation were some of the most positive accomplishments of the dialogue. However, the QOD answers, especially those regarding Christ's human nature and atonement, proved to be seriously disturbing for many Seventh-day Adventists.

The Adventist dissent and M. L. Andreasen

The reasons for the heated reactions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church are somewhat complex, but one thing stands out clearly: the main voice of dissent belonged to M. L. Andreasen, one of Adventism's most respected theology professors and writers of the 1930s and 1940s. His distinctive views on the atonement and the humanity of Christ did seem to represent a certain consensus within Adventist thinking, as the church moved into the dialogue with the evangelicals. While Andreasen's teachings on both these issues (atonement and the human nature of Christ) had never become official, many considered his views to be solid Adventist orthodoxy.

The core of Andreasen's theology is that the atonement involved three essential phases.

The first consisted of Christ's sinless life of perfect obedience to God's law; the second was His death on the cross where "Christ finished His work as victim and sacrifice."³

While these first two atonement phases were certainly foundational to Andreasen's teaching on the atonement, it was the third that contained the essential focus of his theology, and Andreasen had laid it out in clear and unmistakable language: "In the third phase Christ demonstrates that man can do what He did, with the same help He had. This phase includes His session at the right hand

of God, His high priestly ministry, and the final exhibition of His saints in their last struggle with Satan, and their glorious victory."

This third phase, Andreasen said, is now in progress in the sanctuary above and in the church below. Christ broke the power of sin in His lifework on earth. He destroyed sin and Satan by His death. He is now eliminating and destroying sin in His saints on earth. This is a part of the cleansing of the true sanctuary.⁴

The key theological principle that undergirded this Most Holy Place phase of the atonement was Andreasen's Christology. He firmly held that Christ had taken a sinful human nature, just like Adam's after the Fall (in other words, a sinful nature with tendencies to sin). Thus with the empowering Christ as an example to His last-generation followers, the final atonement could be effected from the heavenly sanctuary as it played out through the sinless perfected characters of the embattled saints on earth. This final atonement, final generation theology, was most clearly set forth in the chapter "The Last Generation" in Andreasen's well-known book *The Sanctuary Service*.⁵

In this chapter Andreasen stated that Satan was not definitively and conclusively defeated at the Cross. Satan's ultimate defeat would be effected through the sinless, perfect histories of the final generation. Andreasen was quick to claim that such a final victory would be achieved only through grace, which would be imparted to the saints from the Great Exemplar in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

In other words, this faithful remnant would develop sinless characters that would replicate the sinless perfect life that Christ had wrought out in the very same fallen, sinful human nature. It is this nature that the final generation would overcome. Thus Christ, through the remnant's victory, will defeat Satan, vindicate God's demand for perfect obedience, and this vindication of God will finally

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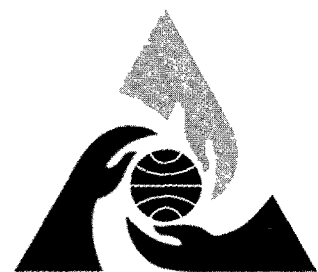


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What is to be made of this understanding of the atonement in relationship to the answers given by the Seventh-day Adventist respondents in QOD?

Where are we now?

When all the dust has settled, we can clearly affirm the following. Neither the authors of QOD nor Andreasen really disagreed about Phases One and Two. There were, however, two disagreements over Phase Three:

The first disagreement had more to do with terminology than substance: The term "completed atonement" that QOD used was fully consistent with Andreasen in the following sense: The atoning work of Christ on the cross was completed in that full provision had been made there to save all. But it was not complete in that the "completed act of atonement on the cross is valueless to any soul unless, and until, it is applied by Christ our High Priest to, and appropriated by, the individual recipient."⁷

It is clear that Froom and Roy Allan Anderson were not doing away with a Most Holy Place phase of atonement. They consistently used the language of "atonement provided" at the Cross and "atonement applied" in Christ's heavenly ministry during the day of atonement antitypes in the Most Holy Place.

However, the second disagreement over Phase Three was much more substantive and significant: The QOD respondents were not enthused about Andreasen's vision of the people of the "final generation" being the agents through which Christ would effect the final atonement. While it appears that they did not directly attack Andreasen's final-generation atonement, they did disagree with the Christology that undergirded it.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the two most controversial and ongoing legacies of QOD are that it sparked new discussions of what Adventists mean by the following:

1. The expressions "final atonement," and

2. The "fallen, sinful human nature of Christ."

While the purpose of this article is not to enter into a debate over these contentious issues, I would like to close with some perspective and suggestions for further study.

Perspectives for further study

"Final Atonement." While there are still those who advocate Andreasen's last-generation version of "final atonement" (through the sinless perfection of the remnant), I would like to raise the following questions:

Where in Scripture or in the writings of Ellen White do we find this theology explicitly laid out?

Do Scripture and Ellen White clearly teach that God has made the ultimate success of Christ's atoning work dependent upon the perfecting experience of the "remnant"?

Is there not solid Bible and Ellen White evidence for the claim that Christ has fully vindicated God's demand for perfect obedience by His own life and work?

Would it not be more appropriate to suggest that Christ vindicates His Father in the Most Holy Place phase of the "great controversy" by demonstrating that the Trinity has been completely consistent with its nature of infinite love in the disposition of the cases of every human being?⁸

Furthermore, could it be that we are all wrestling with a more foundational issue:

What is the role of human effort and accomplishment in the great plan of salvation? How dependent is God on the successes of His professed followers for His own vindication?

In the final analysis, the most controversial outcome of the QOD debates flows from the issues surrounding "The Humanity of Christ."⁹ Without Andreasen's undergirding "post-Fall" view of Christ's human nature, Andreasen's version of the perfecting of the final generation and its role in God's vindication is called into

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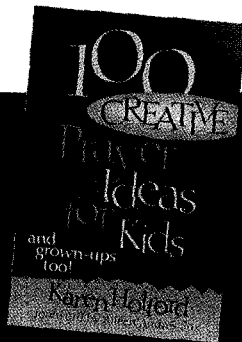
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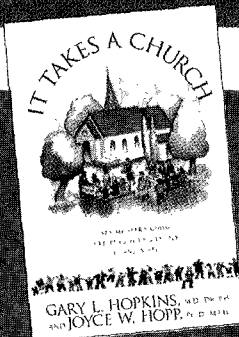


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serious question. Here too is the most important legacy of QOD.

While there is hardly anyone today who would agree with the particular version of "pre-Fall" Christology that the QOD authors put forth (that Christ did not take a "fallen, sinful nature," but only had it "imputed" to Him), they did spark further reflection, which has spawned two clearly articulated interpretations of what is meant by the expression "sinful human nature of Christ."

These positions are:

1. The classic "post-Fall" position of Andreasen, and
2. The "alternative Christology," which was pioneered by the late Edward Heppenstall and propounded by his successors at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to this day.

The "alternative Christology" acknowledges Ellen White's "post-Fall" statements, but suggests that these refer not to any "infection" of sin in Christ's humanity but only to the way that sin "affected" Him.

Where do we go from here?

Hopefully, the publication of this new edition of QOD will contribute to further clarification of these important questions. ■

- 1 Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine (Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957); henceforth referred to as QOD.
- 2 The expressions in quotations are Knight's taken from his "Introduction" to the new edition of QOD.
- 3 M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 53.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 59, 60.
- 5 Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1937, 1947).
- 6 *Ibid.*, 299-301.
- 7 I. E. Froom, "The Priestly Application of the Atoning Act," *Ministry*, February 1957, 10; compare QOD, 349-355.
- 8 The following publications lay out the "pros" and "cons." On the "pro" side, see Herbert Douglass, *The End* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1979) and *Why Jesus Waits* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976). On the "con" side, see Eric C. Webster, *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984; Republished, Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1992), 396-428; and Woodrow W. Whidden, "The Vindication of God and the Harvest Principle," *Ministry*, October 1994, 44-47.
- 9 For an excellent review of the Adventist debate over the humanity of Christ and a classic defense of the traditional "post-Fall" view, see J. R. Zurcher, *Touched With Our Feelings* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1999). For a defense of the "alternative" or the "pre-Fall" position, see *Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1988), 45-52; and Woodrow Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1997).

Handling extremism and fanaticism in the local church

John E. Tumpkin

Extrmsim and fanaticism are not uncommon in the local church. Left untreated, they can quickly spread in the body of Christ and destroy that body's vision, mission, and unity. I suggest a threefold redemptive approach: *Recognize, Rectify, and Reclaim.*

Recognize the particular ingredients

Dealing with spiritual imbalance in a congregation requires recognizing certain basic ingredients that are at the core of such imbalance. These include the causes, the groups at risk, the signs, the methods, and the results of the extremism.

A major cause of extremism is a major cause! That is to say, the most fertile breeding ground for extremism is what is perceived as a worthy and important cause. Extremism implies the carrying to extremes of something that in itself may be good, important, and exciting. Thus a cause that seeks to acquaint humankind with vital, unusual truths that are largely unknown or neglected, offers a superb setting for the development of extremism.

Consequently, it is not surprising when extremism afflicts wholesome and urgent causes such as nuclear-disarmament, vegetarianism, and environmental preservation. In the religious sphere, a return to primitive godliness, preparation for the soon coming of Christ, and the need for holy living are some of the good causes that become hurtful when

taken to the extreme.

When God used Martin Luther to spearhead the Protestant Reformation, the movement was hindered and hounded by extreme elements: "A few men, deeply affected by the excitement in the religious world, imagined themselves to have received special revelations from Heaven, and claimed to have been divinely commissioned to carry forward to its completion the Reformation which, they declared, had been but feebly begun by Luther. In truth, they were undoing the very work which he had accomplished."¹ Then, as in our day, some felt that the mainstream reform had not gone far or fast enough.

When such extremism afflicts a movement, many within and without have their faith shaken. Insiders tend to wonder whether their cause is correct, while onlookers may be discouraged from taking any interest at all in the cause. It is helpful to recognize that extremism does not imply that the cause is corrupt.

On a personal level, extremism may result from an imbalanced preoccupation with a particular aspect of Christian belief or lifestyle. Surface or careless reading of spiritual writings may result in the tendency to force texts or passages to suit a "pet" belief. Sometimes a clash with church authority and an unwillingness to persuade patiently may lead to a persecution, prophet, or martyr complex, and a spirit of independent assertiveness.

As important as recognizing the causes of extremism is identifying the groups at risk. It is tempting for a frustrated pastor to think of extremists as loony crackpots with as much sense as a saltshaker. The opposite is often true! Some of our most dedicated and earnest members are in danger of being deluded by the counterfeit righteousness of extremism.

Many younger and older people with a sincere desire to prepare others and themselves for the coming of our Lord are disheartened and distressed by worldliness and the lack of consecration within the church. When people or documents come, deploring these conditions and upholding the "faithful few," it is hard for them to discern the subtle denigration of leadership, cohesiveness, and authentic spirituality that accompany such pleas, pushing them over the line into extremism.

One of the signs of extremism may well be fervent study of "spiritual" material. However, the extremist revival always contains the double-edged sword of exhortation

John E. Tumpkin is a pastor in Zimbabwe, Africa.

to more serious Christianity on the one hand, and negative, destructive criticism of the church on the other.

A related sign of extremism is the sudden “resurrection” of skillfully and dishonestly selected Spirit of Prophecy quotations, accompanied by the suggestion that there is a conspiracy of some kind in the church, seeking to do away with the work and the authority of Ellen G. White.

This leads us to look at the methods extremists use as they seek to spread their teachings in our churches.

While these vary according to the groups and individuals involved, they all utilize the well-known psychological principle of moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar; from the accepted to the new; from the established to the speculative.

Often, pastors who attempt to deprive their congregations of material emanating from independent movements fail in their quest because there is *nothing wrong with*

the material—that is, with *much* of it.

Sometimes, the suspicions of members are allayed by the presentation of material by Ellen White. However, this material is all too often filled with out-of-context quotations, and mingled with supplemental writing containing more fanciful creations.

A survey of some of these fanciful materials may well lead a pastor to underestimate the allure of particular extremist information. The pastor may see what appears to be unbridled absurdity that would influence no one. This may not be the case. To dismiss extremists as empty and “crackpot” could be a great mistake.

Extremists succeed in deluding people precisely because they move from the real to the surreal. They gain the confidence and allegiance of their adherents by first convincing them of their loyalty to the Christian truths we all believe in; and once this is achieved, they intermingle their more esoteric and peculiar beliefs.

The extremist has the ability to move from the real to the quasi-real to the unreal through their powerful videos. The electronic and film media are highly persuasive when presented in well-modulated tones by an urbane and venerable presenter, in the absence of an opposing view.

How to rectify the problem

A problem recognized is a problem on the way to being solved. Again, *extremism* implies taking a good cause to excess, whereas *fanaticism* usually merely implies “violent, unreasoning enthusiasm.”² While extremism includes fanaticism, it is the more pervasive and basic of the two problems. Extremism unchecked breeds fanaticism. Here are some ways we can deal with extremism.

1. When the writings of Ellen G. White are, for instance, used without properly considering the context, the best remedy is simply to put them back into proper context. Nothing

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will so clearly rebut the abusers of Mrs. White's writings as a wholesome study of one or more of her works as a whole.


If documents that abuse the Spirit of Prophecy begin to seep into a congregation, perhaps it is time to initiate a prayer meeting series on *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages*, or some other work by Mrs. White. Balance and perspective need no better defender than Mrs. White's own pen.

2. Abuse of the Spirit of Prophecy often arises from unclear views of inspiration and canon. When we ask the average Seventh-day Adventist which is greater, the Bible or the writings of Ellen White, we are likely to encounter hesitation. Mrs. White would not have hesitated. She knew the value of her gift, but she very aptly and unequivocally pictured her role as that of a lesser light reflecting the greater light.

Recognizing that the Bible is the *only* rule of faith does not diminish the authority of Mrs. White's writings, but enhances it by focusing on the "great light" to which she pointed. To say that the Bible is greater than Mrs. White's writings does not imply grades of inspiration. What it does mean is that the works of Mrs. White are to be tested by the Bible. Even the most extreme adherent of Ellen White would never overtly propose the reverse.


It is very important for a minister to understand and teach a sound doctrine of inspiration and biblical canon so as to minimize the abuse of the Spirit of Prophecy. Extremists will not welcome this approach because it defeats them most effectively. Emphasizing the primacy of the Bible is, therefore, the best and most practical starting point for checking abuse of the Spirit of Prophecy. Some may resent this suggestion, since it levels the playing field by shifting the focus of attention to the Bible.

3. Some may ask, for example, "Which Bible? The good old King James or one of the modern versions?" Here again, Ellen White's




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balance in appreciating all honest attempts at translating the Scriptures may prove to be the best answer: "Wycliffe's Bible had been translated from the Latin text, which contained many errors. . . . In 1516, a year before the appearance of Luther's theses, Erasmus had published his Greek and Latin version of the New Testament. Now for the first time many [not all!] errors of former versions were corrected, and the sense was more clearly rendered."³

It is evident that Ellen White greatly appreciated Wycliffe's Bible and the incomparable good it did;⁴ but she was balanced and honest enough to acknowledge errors and appreciate better original manuscripts, even from the hands of none other than the "timid and time-serving"⁵ Erasmus!

While we may have our pet versions, it would appear prudent to appreciate God's truths in the version where "the sense [is] more clearly rendered!"⁶ Again, this will be unwelcome news to those who insist, again quite extremely, on the archaic English of 1611.

Reclaiming

The best, and even the underlying,

reason for rectifying extremism is to reclaim, or to attempt to reclaim those who have been deluded by it. Paul and Simon the Zealot were once extremists, and the Holy Spirit reclaimed and transformed them to do a magnificent work for Christ.

Sometimes we seem to be strong on rectifying, but weak on reclaiming. Without reclaiming, our effort to rectify may indeed turn to be a means of wreck-tifying. To reclaim requires a positive approach. Extend the hand of love to those caught in the trap of extremism. Assure them of God's love and intense care for them. Appeal to them to look at the issues with an open mind, letting the Holy Spirit provide the needed illumination. When people sense our genuine interest in them and our sincere Christian love for them, reclaiming them for Christ becomes altogether possible. ■

1 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1950), 186.
2 J. P. Brasier-Creagh and B. A. Workman, eds., *Purnell's Family Dictionary in Colour* (Paulton, Bristol: Purnell Books, 1982), 313.
3 White, 245.
4 *Ibid.*, 88, 89.
5 *Ibid.*, 216.
6 *Ibid.*, 245.

Entertainment as worship: Old Testament trends

Kai Arasola

Prostitution is part of the sad side of the Old Testament story. But what is sadder is that it has often been associated with the history of religion and with its places of worship. The Bible speaks of prostitution even in Israel, at times practiced in the surroundings of the Jerusalem temple. One has to wonder how prostitution could have been tolerated so close to a temple that, among other things, contained in its holiest sanctum the divinely inscribed code, "Do not commit adultery."

Of course, no one could claim that temple prostitution is a central theme in the Old Testament. However, prostitution, as we encounter it in the Bible, is a disturbing complexity. Close to one hundred biblical references speak about prostitutes or prostitution. In many instances the word is used metaphorically to refer to idol worship or the practice of false belief and worship. Some texts refer to prostitution without any link to religion. About a dozen biblical passages clearly refer to sexual prostitution connected to the temple—what the New International Version translates as "shrine prostitution."

Shrine prostitution and Israel

All these references are in the earliest parts of Old Testament history—in patriarchal narratives, in the law formulated in the Pentateuch, in the book of Job, and in texts dealing with the first temple era (the histori-

cal books and the pre-exilic prophets).

Temple prostitution was common in many religions, and God warned Israel against it in the most unmistakable terms: "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same" (Exod. 34:15, 16).*

"No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the Lord your God to pay any vow, because the Lord your God detests them both" (Deut. 23:17, 18).

In spite of these divine warnings, Israel did not allow itself to go unscathed when it came to the despicable practice, and prostitution appeared in the so-called "high places" around the country. Shrine prostitution, often connected with the "Asherah" poles, is mentioned about 40 times in the Old Testament.¹

These poles were found in all parts of the country. "Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites" (1 Kings 14:22-24).

By the time of King Asa, shrine prostitution went beyond the high places and, as already mentioned, was well established in the precincts of the Jerusalem temple itself. So the king fired and expelled the male prostitutes (1 Kings 15:11-13). The practice was so deeply rooted that Asa's son Jehoshaphat had to continue the work of expulsion (1 Kings 22:45, 46).

A few generations later the great reform of Josiah may finally have put an end to temple prostitution, both male and female (see Ezek. 8:14). At that time the Asherah poles were also destroyed and their housing near the temple was demolished (2 Kings 23:6, 7).

Hosea, from the Southern Kingdom, expresses horror at the prevalence of both temple and common prostitution: "I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with

*Kai Arasola, D.Min.,
teaches religious
studies at Mission
College, Saraburi
Province, Thailand.*

shrine prostitutes—a people without understanding will come to ruin” (Hosea 4:14, NIV; cf. 4:10-13). Not that the prophet approves adultery and general prostitution, but he expresses God’s horror at the prospect of mixing worship with prostitution.

According to Micah, the general situation in Jerusalem itself was not that different. “All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used” (Micah 1:7).

Why did temple prostitution prevail?

Why did this religiously sanctioned practice of lust prevail when both the heart of the law and the messages of the prophets denounced it?

An answer seems to be contained in the well-documented fact that Israel simply followed the practices common among the religion and fertility cults of her neighbors. Their so-called *hieros gamos* or holy wedding rituals mutated what was sexual into the supposedly sacred sexual and fertility themes of fruitfulness that were, for instance, related to Baal, Seth, or Tammuz. The worship of Moloch also included sexual myths and practices (Isa. 57:1-13).²

However, Israel’s emulation of its neighbors’ customs is not the underlying reason for the popularity in Israel of combining such sexual practices with its religious faith. The seminal reason is less obvious and overt: the practice of using the temple as a place of entertainment, albeit entertainment with “religious” overtones.

Two biblical examples illustrate how easy it was to turn religion into a pursuit of amusement:

At Mount Sinai, Israel eagerly swore that all that the Lord had said they would do (Exod. 19:8; 24:3, 7), but a few days later a bawdy party was thrown, with a golden bull at the center, and “nakedness” as part of what was in fact a religious celebration

(Exod. 32:17-26).

Some years later pretty girls from Baal-worshiping Moab invited the Israelites to a semi-religious gathering where “the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab” and where they “called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods” (Num. 25:1-9, KJV).

These two almost random examples indicate that in those days some forms of pagan worship included sexual features that easily escalated into orgies. Such religion provided a way, for the Israelite, at least to legitimize illicit sexual practice, placing it under the guise of religious faith.

It is reasonable to conclude that religious centers, high places, and temples, were, in some Old Testament times, the best places of entertainment (in the “worldly” sense of the word). The journey from forms of entertainment with sexual overtones to orgies was not a long one to take.

The practice at Baalbek

The same point can be easily illustrated by a tour around the temple of Baalbek. This is the largest temple ruin in the Middle East and the best representation of what Canaanite religion really was, and what Israel was dealing with and influenced by. This is true, even though the present ruins stem from the Roman era.³

Baalbek was located in Lebanon’s present southern Bekaa valley. Visitors would enter the temple through a massive staircase leading to the gate complex. As they approached the gate they would see booths where priests or priestesses advised the “worshippers” on what was being offered in the temple area. The first concern was the choice of sacrifices that was available for the arriving worshiper.

After the order had been placed for a goat, lamb, chicken, or bull, the visitors stepped through the gate into the main courtyard where the animal was brought up from huge stables below for their inspection. After appropriate rituals the animal was slaughtered on one of the two giant

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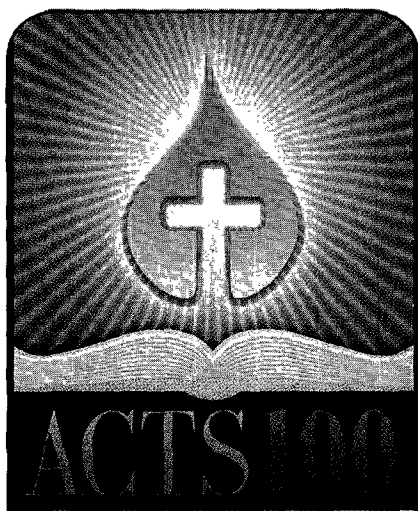
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altars that still dominate today's ruins of the main courtyard.

As in the high places of Israel and at the temple of Jerusalem major portions of the meat were then given to the worshipers for their personal use (Lev. 7:16-18; Deut. 12:27; cf. 1 Sam. 2:13ff.). In Baalbek the visitors could have their meal prepared in the temple kitchens and have an enjoyable lunch or dinner with their friends and/or priestesses or priests in one of the niches of the great courtyard of the temple. A good meal was part of a good worship experience.

This kind of arrangement is not entirely absent in Old Testament descriptions. Saul is said to have enjoyed a sumptuous meal when meeting Samuel at one of the high places (1 Sam. 9:14-24). Also Ezekiel's vision of the temple included four kitchens for the preparation of sacrifices (Ezek. 46:21-24).

In Baalbek the visitors moved on to the second courtyard after the meal. Again impressive wide stairs led to the area of the main temple of Baal or Jupiter. This temple may have included holy or most holy places, as Phoenician temples usually did. The wide flat floor next to the stairs, and the colonnade, provided a good setting for theatrical displays, choirs, and other performances.

Modern imagery may not do full justice of the actual facts, but it makes the experience easier to understand. The visitors move from the "restaurant" to the "theater." After watching the show to their satisfaction, it was time to move on. Some may have continued to smaller specialized structures for fortune-telling, healing, or other purposes.

The next large temple building was particularly suited for a visit late in the day. It is the temple of Bacchus, the god of wine and pleasure.

Vines, grapes, and opium buds were carved into the portico to express the intent of this establishment. Thus after the "restaurant" and the "theater," the "worshiper" entered what could be called a "nightclub," a

place to drink wine or to smoke opium, and to watch dancing girls performing on a high and wide stage. It was all calculated to raise the passion levels of the visitors.

The stage was now set for the final part of the visit. On the way out the visitors would pass the temple of Venus with room for hundreds of temple prostitutes, who might have served as escorts and companions throughout the worshipers' visit to the temple.

The temples of Baalbek were bigger and more comprehensive than any other temple in the area. In some ways every Canaanite high place or shrine had parts of Baalbek in it. To complete the picture one needs to mention that this worship with entertainment was not free. Visitors had to pay for their pleasure (see Deut. 23:17, 18; Hosea 2:5, 8; Micah 1:7). If in no other way, this was done through their purchase of the "sacrifices" they chose as they entered. All this is only one aspect of what went on in the temples and the minds of the people.⁴

Worship or entertainment?

The relatively small number of biblical passages that connect prostitution to the temple in Jerusalem do not warrant a conclusion that this was a permanent part of worship there. However, with Israel's neighbors these kinds of practices were relatively permanent. They practiced their "worship" before the conquest of the land by Israel and kept it up for centuries after the latest Old Testament reference to it.

Within Judah and Israel shrine prostitution may have been fixed more at the high places or the temples of the Northern Kingdom at Bethel, Dan, or Samaria. It may be that in Jerusalem there were only short spells of these kinds of practices.

One may still want to ask: But how could Israel let any of this come into the temple of the Yahweh? Maybe, as we've suggested, they were enticed by the ways of the ancient Canaanites. Maybe they wanted their religion to be

continued on page 31

Listen and love: How do you treat gay people?

Until 15 years ago, I had never walked in the shoes of a homosexual. I never even gave the topic much attention because it never concerned me. Then I learned that our youngest son is gay. That knowledge gave me a new perspective. I was asked to place my feet in my son's shoes and walk with him.

How our family coped with the experience turned into a book.¹ Since writing that book, I have become involved in ministering to other families going through similar things. I have come to know and love many gay sons and daughters and to appreciate their sensitive and caring nature, their artistic talents, their struggles, and the penetrating depths of their spiritual longings.

I have also learned in talking to pastors that homosexuality is an issue in many congregations—an issue they are all too often unprepared to deal with.

How would you respond?

Pastor Wilcox glanced at his watch. It was almost time for his appointment with Paul, the talented college-age son of the head elder. He had revitalized the Sabbath School's junior department during the recent summer months.

"Good to see you, Paul," the pastor said, smiling, as the slim, dark-haired young man sat down. "It's great when you students come home for the summer and add your gifts and talents. The junior kids follow you around as if you were the Pied Piper! And it's so good to have you playing the organ for church again. We've missed you and your musical talents around here."

Paul was silent as he stared down at his hands, and Pastor Wilcox began to

CARROL GRADY



wonder just what Paul had on his mind. At last Paul drew a resolute breath and looked up. "Pastor Wilcox," he blurted out, "I'm gay, and I don't know what to do about it."

Few pastors really know how, or feel confident enough to handle a situation such as this constructively and redemptively. How would you respond?

Some pastors might reach for their Bibles and turn to Genesis 19, Leviticus 18, or Romans 1. Would you tell Paul that he just needed to find a nice girl, get married, and his "problem" would go away? Or would you express sympathy for his "handicap" and tell him you would pray for God to give him the strength to remain celibate the rest of his life? Would you refer him to a change ministry and assure him that if he just had enough faith, God would help him overcome? What should a pastor do?

Damaging approaches

When one young man came in confidence to ask his pastor for help, the pastor announced his "problem" to the whole congregation at the next week's worship service and asked the assembled church to pray for him.

In another case an outgoing pastor

told his replacement what he alone knew—that the church's popular and enthusiastic young music director was gay (but celibate). The new pastor decided it was his responsibility to exorcise the "demon of homosexuality" from the young man and told the church board about his plans. As a result, the church was split, and the music director left the church.

If a pastor is unprepared to deal with such situations, his or her tentative ineptness can drive a wedge between young homosexuals and the church. This, along with church members' prejudices and ignorance about the reality of homosexuality, has driven many gay young people from the church and from Christ.

Sometimes parents, distressed by the alienating way the church has treated their children, follow them out of the church. Other parents, taking their cue from the harsh, condemning remarks they have heard ministers make, feel they must reject and condemn their children too.

Some pastors are so repulsed by the thought of homosexuality that they react with visceral antipathy. Others have heard so many different theories about homosexuality that they aren't sure *what* to believe, say, or do. Many simply feel extremely uncomfortable with this sensitive issue. Their first instinct is to offer some platitude or a quick solution and move on to another topic as soon as possible.

The problem is that when a gay person brings their concern to the pastor, they are like any other parishioner who needs the same listening ear, the same pastoral concern.

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Fears of homosexual people

The fear of "what others would think if they knew" keeps many young people in the "closet." But the burden of living a lie and pretending to be something they are not finally builds to unbearable pressure.

"I'm terrified of what coming out will mean to my life, my future, my friends," laments Jeff* from Canada. "I've always known that I could never really be myself lest others hate me. Most of my friendships are based on a fundamental lie about myself, so I can't accept the affirmations and encouragement of my friends. Someone tells me they think I'm wise or a good Christian or a valued friend, and a door slams shut inside of me telling me that they would never say that if they really knew me. I'm starving for affection and acceptance, but can't seem to accept what I receive because I know it's based on a lie."

Rogelio writes from the Philippines, "The sufferings of a homosexual person [are] immense and at times almost beyond consolation. As [a] hidden or closet homosexual, I have so many times experienced the despairs of life. It's so painful to have no one to talk to."

"Every church member I knew was heterosexual and wouldn't understand how I felt," remembers Dwight from England. "There was absolutely no one to befriend me or to talk to confidentially. Who could I turn to for genuine helpful support and understanding? I didn't know of anyone at all. I was going through a kind of personal hell!"

The first thing a pastor needs to recognize is how enormously difficult it is for a young man or woman to find the courage to talk to him or her in the first place—what an emotion-laden moment this is and what far-reaching results the pastor's reaction will have. The pastor needs to respond with utmost tact, warmth, and understanding.

Hearing the loneliness and confusion

Loneliness, isolation, and confusion are felt by young people as they come to recognize that their feelings of emotional and sexual attraction are different

and unacceptable.

"Loneliness? It's my daily bread. Sometimes it feels like hell," writes Jonathan, an Indonesian student.

"I honestly feel that the sexual temptations are easy to bear compared to the consuming loneliness that so often threatens to devour me. Some days I ache inside for relationship," shares Peter from California.

Rogelio further expresses the confusion of many homosexuals as they try to reconcile the reality of their feelings with the expectations of church and society. "I do not know where to put myself. I am disturbed by my feelings [about a] life that is a lie. I pretend to be a man, but deep inside me is another being crying for help."

Just be willing to listen

Immediately finding a way to "fix it" is an almost automatic reaction when we are confronted with a problem. This is especially true of the male in contemporary Western culture. Because of the nature and values that are a part of the image of today's pastor, this tendency may be even more prominent in pastors. Thus it is not strange that this is just what the average pastor wants to do when a young person shares his or her devastation because of homosexuality—*fix it!*

But this is the very thing he cannot do. There is no good, easy answer that is simply going to *fix* things for this young person. Besides, this is not really what the homosexual person is actually looking for, anyway. Instead, his desperate need is for someone to listen, lovingly and non-judgmentally, as he finally pours out all the pent-up feelings.

Homosexuals need someone to come alongside to understand the fear and the pain. They need to feel permission to express their desires and longings, even though they may not be approved of. Perhaps this is why most female pastors intuitively know better how to handle this kind of situation.

"I feel like all I've ever found in the church is self-hatred, loneliness, pain and a sense of failure," says Jeff, ques-

continued on page 29



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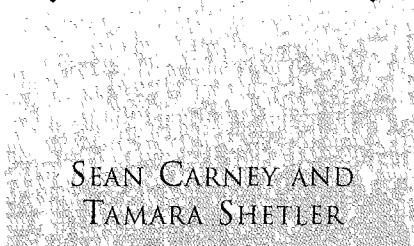
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Upon his return to British Columbia, Sean got involved in online conversations with other Adventists, sharing his ideas to organize an Internet-based outreach ministry. Little did he realize that he was not alone in his thoughts. Gary Regan, a computer network engineer in Silicon Valley, California, invited Sean to the Bay Area to discuss the idea further. Sean moved out to the heart of the technology industry—where inspiration



SEAN CARNEY AND TAMARA SHETLER

is a prerequisite for innovation. With the help of Gordon Harty, TAGnet was born. "Once I stepped out in faith, God opened all the doors," explains Carney.

TAGnet gets started and moves on

TAGnet was officially launched in July 1995. Their initial goal was to provide an efficient and cost-effective way for Adventist ministry organizations to get online. Within six months, ten groups

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church already has a Web site through a recently released NAD Church Directory. The NAD Church Directory was created in partnership with the Adventist Directory at the request of Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the president for communication of the North American Division. Advanced Content Management Services are also available to larger organizations such as unions, conferences, departments, and publishers.

TAGnet receives support through membership fees, generous donors, and tireless volunteers. TAGnet is also a member of ASI. As a service provider and supporter of the many ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, TAGnet welcomes you to the digital age.

To learn more about TAGnet, please visit their Web site at <http://www.tag-net.org/>. ■



Sean Carney is president of TAGnet and lives in Mountain View, California.



Tamara Shetler, a media/public relations consultant, lives in Sherman Oaks, California.

Listen and love

continued from page 26

tioning religion's ability to meet him where he is. "I keep hearing evangelists talking about the emptiness inside that Christ can fill, but I follow Him and I'm still painfully empty inside. So if I'm going to have the pain and loneliness and emptiness, doesn't it make sense that I might as well go for the 'fun' part of the equation too? I mean, if you're going to get the stomachache, you might as well have the pie that supposedly causes it."

Dwight frankly admits his longings. "I know for sure that total absence of

any gay affection is slowly but surely destroying me as a human being, who has much to give another. I so very much need the understanding dialogue and gentle touch of a sympathetic, compatible friendship that only another homosexual Adventist in my life can satisfy."

Could not at least some of this kind of innate longing be met by a pastor who simply meets it with deep, genuine love and understanding? Surely this is how Jesus would meet such a yearning.

Don't add to their feelings of isolation

Many homosexuals have deep spiritual longings. This is amazing when we consider how difficult so many Christians have made it for them to feel part of the church.

"At one stage," says Dwight, "I investigated the possibility of other Christian groups where homosexuals receive love and understanding fellowship. But deep down I knew that such a compromise would ultimately not satisfy."

To meet a homosexual's tentative reaching out for help with a reminder of biblical proscriptions and church standards is the approach most likely to snuff out the flickering flame of a struggling faith. Instead, we need to draw him or her into the church's warm, supporting embrace.

We need to change our focus from pointing out and condemning sin to sharing the unconditional love God has lavished on us. We need to provide an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit can convict in the way and at the time He knows is most appropriate.

Most homosexuals eventually leave the church in despair because they find no hope there. But we can change that if we are willing to walk in their shoes; if we can just listen—and love.

* Names have been changed.

Carol Grady, a freelance writer, lives in Snohomish, Washington.

1 Kate McLaughlin, *My Son, Beloved Stranger* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1995).

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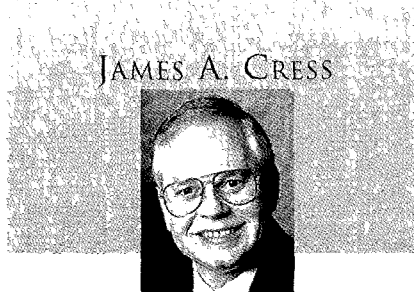
Honoring pastors

When Pastor Tercio Sarli, president of the mega-size Central Brazil Union, writes me twice about the same issue, the matter is clearly important. When this twice-scribed topic is expressing appreciation for pastors, the matter is clearly important to each of us, and its significance provokes us to publish this article simultaneously in *Ministry*, *Elders Digest*, and *Shepherdess Journal*, along with my personal request that every reader copy and distribute a copy to all church officers.

Why express appreciation to pastors? Note the Bible command: "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13, NIV). "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7, NIV).

Today's increased societal suspicion of all leaders has combined with clergy scandals, occasional mediocre performance by some pastors, and unrealistic expectations from some members to reduce the levels of high esteem with which professional ministers have traditionally been viewed.

Too often it seems easier to criticize than to affirm and express appreciation for the outstanding service that pastors give. For example, one member recently wrote to complain that his pastor does not spend sufficient time preparing sermons, while someone from a different church, griped that all their pastor does is study to prepare sermons. One complains that pastors never visit, while another opines that the pastor only goes from house to house. Why can't we get more letters like the elder who recently said, "I have no other reason to write except to say how wonderfully our pas-



JAMES A. CRESS

tor serves." Believe me, I answered that letter and sent a copy to the pastor and the conference president.

What the denomination can do. Pastor Sarli encourages the entire church to adopt an annual Pastor's Day in which we affirm the role of ministry in general and express appreciation for our local pastors particularly. And he puts his energies and money alongside his opinion. Recently he sent every pastor a letter of commendation with a special gift. Plus, pastoral families in his union are regularly affirmed in special conventions designed for their spiritual growth and continuing education.

General Conference Ministerial Association requests every reader to duplicate and distribute this article to your local church board.

Various denominations have emphasized one weekend in October. My own congregation commemorates the anniversary of the date when our pastor first came to serve our church. While it may be impossible to select the same day throughout the world, surely every field can schedule a Pastor's and Ministerial Vocations day upon which currently-serving pastors are honored and young people are invited to prayerfully consider whether God is calling them to ministry.

What unions or conferences can do. Uplift the role of ministry, value pastors, and ask each local congregation to plan something special which will honor their pastor. Perhaps designate a specific date for your territory and request that each church plan accordingly. Follow Pastor Sarli's example by writing each minister to express your personal appreciation for the valuable contribution they bring to God's work.

Charles Heskey, Ministerial Secretary of the North Caribbean Conference, sent a bookmark to every church member in the conference. Titled, "Pray for Your Pastor," it listed specific prayer objectives for the minister's personal life and family needs (you can view a sample at www.ministerialassociation.com).

What the local church can do. Host a special Sabbath that celebrates the blessings your congregation receives from the pastor. Even weak performers might respond to you affirming higher expectations. Plan a fellowship meal, provide flowers or a cake, and present your pastor with a plaque, a new Bible, or a useful book (better yet, a gift certificate so they can select their own). Volunteer for a specific task that will lighten your pastor's work load; offer to visit or give Bible studies with your pastor; establish a pastoral resource fund from which your pastor can purchase useful ministry tools. Invite your pastoral family to lunch, or send them to dinner and babysit their youngsters. Rather than criticizing, try "grandparenting" their teens. Express concerns quietly and only to the pastor. Above all, express your appreciation verbally and write a letter of praise to conference leadership.

What pastors can do. Serve your churches in a worthy manner. Give your best to ministry and your example leadership of the power of God's Spirit in your life will rally others to eagerly follow and honor your leadership. ■

Entertainment . . .

continued from page 24

relevant and meaningful. Perhaps they wanted, or felt they needed, to have their temple and its services compete with the beauty and allure of the Baal temples that surrounded them.

A more fundamental reason, however, was their estrangement from God and thus their lack of heartfelt commitment to Him. This led to meaninglessness and emptiness in their understanding of the true faith of Yahweh, and thus to neglect and apparently urgently needed compromises with all that surrounded them; and thus finally to the adoption of practices diametrically opposed to the essence of the true faith, despite the divine warnings presented in the law and by the prophets.

What of today?

As part of the contemporary world, where the "religions" of increasingly promiscuous entertainment, Holly-

wood, nightclubs, or rave parties make converts much faster than the church of God, we cannot afford to compromise the essential aspects of our heartfelt devotion to our Lord. We cannot allow commercial entertainment to dictate the agenda of Christian worship. The church must not, indeed, by the nature of things, it cannot compete with the world on its turf.

This is not in fact an issue of cultural contextualization, as it may seem to be. It is not about rhythms or music or art forms or even particular forms of worship, per se. It is rather about blatantly crossing a line that God has drawn through Jesus Christ in the very nature of what is of His kingdom and what is of the kingdoms of this present age.

True worship has no room, that is, it cannot by its very nature make room for compromise with something as foreign to the essence of God's kingdom as is so much at the heart of contemporary entertainment. Christian worship cannot make these

accommodations and maintain the life and nature given it by God.

Instead Christian worship must truly and actually uplift God and Him alone. It has to be done not only in spirit but in truth, and not only in truth, but in spirit (John 4:23). This does not, of course, mean that genuine Christian worship should not, or cannot, be animated and enjoyable and even "fun." Indeed, it can be in the best and purest sense of the word—in the sense of the abject joy that is found in loving commitment to Him who promised life, and that "to the full" (John 10:10). ■

** All passages, except as otherwise stated, are from the New International Version.*

- 1 Ruth Heston, "Understanding Asherah: Exploring Semitic Iconography," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 1991.
- 2 Susan Ackerman, "Sacred Sex, Sacrifice and Death: Understanding a Prophetic Poem," *Bible Review*, February 1990; Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973, 1988), 384; James D. Faubion, "Heretot Games: Typology and the Fate of Passon," *Postmodern Culture*, 10.3 (<http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/pmc/index.html>)
- 3 Baalbek was an old Phoenician temple site with buildings or structures that were totally replaced during the Roman era. Earliest written references to these temples are from the Seleucid and Ptolemaic period.
- 4 See Beth Alpert Natcho, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel* (American Schools of Oriental Research, 2001).

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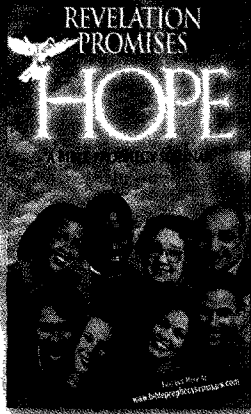
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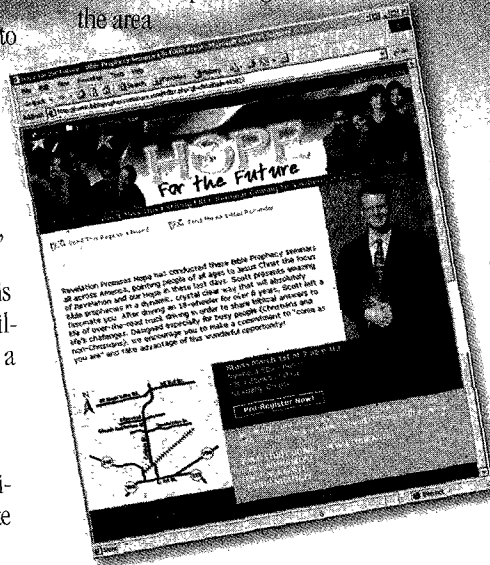
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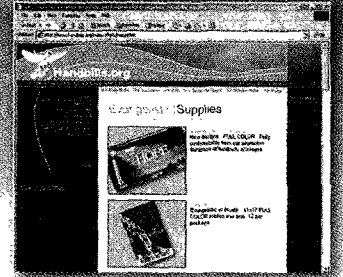
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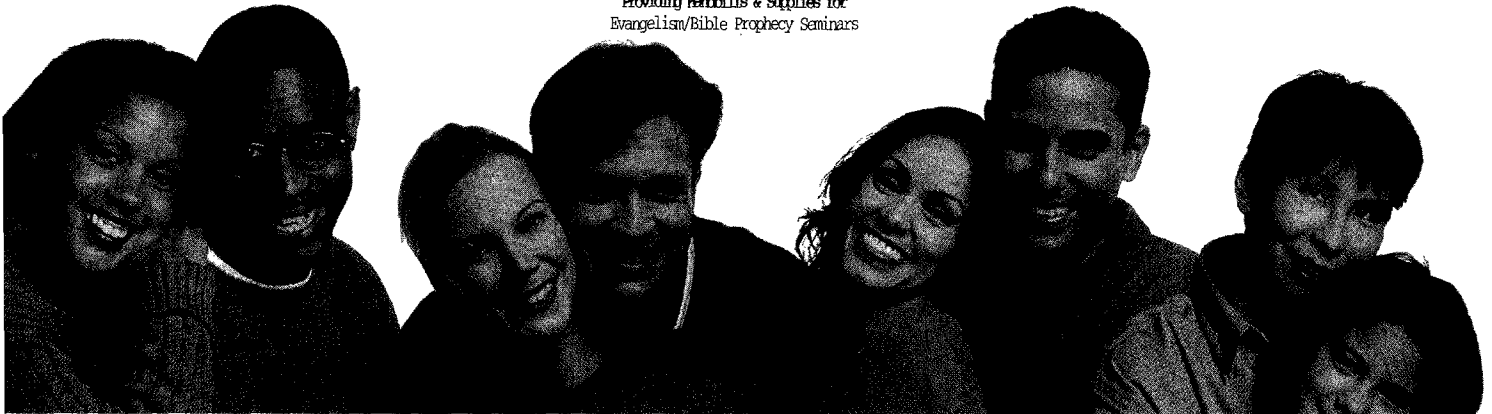
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Supplement to THE MINISTRY
6840 Eastern Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20012
(October 1970)

Reprinted August 2003

As part of *Ministry's* present limited coverage of the doctrine of "the nature of Christ," we are glad to republish this historic *Ministry* insert as a contribution to the ongoing dialogue over this and related issues in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The three essays composing this insert originally appeared in an identical (in terms of content) insert in the October 1970 issue of *Ministry*.

We believe that the emphasis, insight, and balance of the three authors of this work call for a fresh release of their work.

—*Ministry* Editorial Office
August 2003

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Differences of opinion on the subject of Christian perfection have troubled the Christian church throughout its history. There is probably no point of view currently being urged that has not been urged by other advocates in centuries past.

It would be well to remember the counsel given in Selected Messages, Book 1, pages 177, 178, in which God's servant warned a minister that it was not essential for him to know and tell others "all the whys and wherefores as to what constitutes the new heart, or as to the position they can and must reach so as never to sin."

Yet the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy contain numerous statements on the subject of Christian perfection. It is the privilege of the Adventist Bible student to make appropriate use of these counsels when attempting to interpret the Scriptures dealing with this subject.

Part of the misunderstanding of the subject of Christian perfection is semantical. What is meant by perfection, sinless perfection, absolute perfection, ultimate perfection, perfection of character, spiritual perfection and perfection of nature? It is so essential to study each text in its setting. We must earnestly pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we attempt to understand what God is saying on this subject.

Three of our leading Bible teachers have spent considerable time studying this subject. One basic truth, shines clearly from each of these presentations: The perfection which God's children should be seeking is always and only—perfection in Christ. Sensing the value of their contributions, we felt we must share it with our world readership. We suggest that additional copies be secured for distribution among your church members.

May each reader be stimulated to intensify his own study of the Word which will result in a deeper understanding of the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is appropriated to ourselves by faith and faith alone.

GENERAL CONFERENCE MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

October 1970

Christ and Human Perfection in the Writings of E. G. White

ERWIN R. GANE, Union College

I. THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Since E. G. White so consistently represents Christ as, our spiritual example it is not surprising that she frequently considers the subject of Christian perfection in relation to the perfection of Christ during the incarnation. The problem discussed in this paper is best presented in the form of three related questions. (1) What does E. G. White mean by spiritual perfection? (2) Is perfection possible in this life? Is it a goal to be attained, or the process of continual spiritual growth, or both? (3) What relationship does E. G. White recognize between the spiritual perfection of Christ and that of believers? Can we ever hope in this life to be as perfect as was Christ during the incarnation? Was Christ's spiritual heritage the same as that of humanity in general? Did He commence at the same point and proceed by the same means to the same goal? Or, while upholding Christ as our Example in all things spiritual, does E. G. White recognize certain basic differences between His human nature and ours?

The answers to these questions have very definite bearing on the aim of our spiritual endeavors. If as Christians we are to avoid futile, random strivings we must understand what God expects us to achieve as well as the means by which He would have us achieve it. Upon the answers we give to these questions also depends the manner in which we present Christ to the people. E. G. White's well-known warning in this respect is very pertinent. "That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1129. On the other hand she stresses the complete humanity of Christ. "Christ did not make believe take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature

He was the son of Mary; He was of the seed of David according to human descent."—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 247. There is nothing docetic in E. G. White's conception of Christ but neither is there any attempt to reduce Him to the level of lost humanity.

While this paper is not intended to be in any sense exhaustive, it is submitted as a tentative explanatory of E. G. White's overall teaching on the subject.

At the outset it is appropriate to consider E. G. White's definitions of the terms "character" and "nature." Character she defines as a combination of thoughts and feelings which reveal themselves in conduct. "If the thoughts are wrong the feelings will be wrong, and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 310. "True character is a quality of the soul, revealing itself in the conduct."—*Child Guidance*, p. 161. The basis of character, she explains, is the correct exercise of mental and moral powers, the faculties or talents with which we have been endowed.

The mental and moral powers which God has given us do not constitute character. They are talents, which we are to improve, and which, if properly improved, will form a right character. A man may have precious seed in his hand, but that seed is not an orchard. The seed must be planted before it can become a tree. The mind is the garden; the character is the fruit. God has given us our faculties to cultivate and develop. Our own course determines our character. In training these powers so that they shall harmonize and form a valuable character, we have a work which no one but ourselves can do.—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 606.

E. G. White defines "the great moral powers of the soul" as "faith, hope and love."—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 187. It would appear, therefore, that her intended meaning is that character, comprising thoughts, feelings, and

actions, is based on the use of certain faculties, capacities, powers, the most important of which is the capacity to exercise faith, hope and love. In speaking of mental powers, as in part the basis of character, she does not mean to suggest that intellectual ability is a prerequisite of good character, for she writes, "Mental ability and genius are not character, for these are often possessed by those who have the very opposite of a good character."—*Child Guidance*, p. 161.

In using the term "nature" Mrs. White often applies it to "spiritual nature" as distinct from the physical and intellectual nature of man. For example, in speaking of Christ she writes that "His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin,"—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1104. She defines for us what she understands by perfect spiritual nature. Speaking of the spiritual condition of man prior to the Fall she writes:

Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is "the express image" of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God, and in perfect obedience to his will.—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 45.

Then a perfect spiritual nature is equated with mental and moral powers completely in harmony with the will of God and fully reflecting His image. Such mental and moral powers are the basis of character. E. G. White in a number of places makes a distinction between "nature" and "character." The former comprises the faculties of the soul, mental and moral capacities, the capability of grasping divine things. The latter consists of the thoughts, feelings and actions which emanate from the nature of man. Nature is the basis of character. She draws this distinction more sharply in *Steps to Christ*.

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed.—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

Originally man's character (thoughts and aims) was

perfect since he was endowed with a perfect nature, "noble powers and a well-balanced mind." But when "his powers [nature] were perverted" his character became imperfect, selfishness taking the place of love. Character perfection now was not possible on the basis of perfect "powers and a well-balanced mind" but only by dependence on the power of God to resist evil.

There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.—*Ibid.*, p. 18.

That E. G. White defines the "nature" of man as "the faculties of the soul," "the capacity for knowing Him," is demonstrated by the following statement from the book *Education*.

Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him. All this work of evil it is Christ's mission to undo. The faculties of the soul, paralyzed by sin, the darkened mind, the perverted will, He has power to invigorate and to restore. He opens to us the riches of the universe, and by Him the power to discern and to appropriate these treasures is imparted. . . . The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ.—*Education*, pp. 28, 29.

When the individual is converted he is given a new character (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 449) and, as we shall see, God intends His people to achieve character perfection. But conversion does not result in a new nature in the sense of new faculties, new mental and moral powers. Referring to conversion E. G. White writes:

New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted, A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 98, 99.

Although E. G. White has much to say about the importance of character perfection she does not present perfection of the faculties, mental and moral powers, the basic nature of man, as a pre-requisite for heaven. These powers are to be kept in a healthy condition (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 64), they are to be put

to the stretch and improved, (*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 606) but there is no suggestion that they will be perfected this side of the second coming of Jesus.

Before we conclude that what we may become in this life is identical in all respects with what Christ was in His human nature, we should ask ourselves, did He inherit at birth an inferior "desire and capacity" for knowing God?—*Education*, pp. 28, 29. Was there in His nature a bent to evil, a force which unaided He could not resist? Were His moral powers imperfect? In other words did Christ inherit what we inherited at birth, a fallen, sinful human nature?

II. THE NATURE OF MAN SPIRITUALLY AT BIRTH

E. G. White has much to say as to the effects of man's fall into sin. By choosing to sin man earned for himself a depraved nature.

But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin; they had lessened their strength to resist evil, and had opened the way for Satan to gain more ready access to them.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61.

This depraved nature was inherited by all the children of Adam. "Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128.

Although she does not enunciate her teaching in terms of the extreme Augustinian doctrine of inherited guilt E. G. White does emphasize that one of the direct results of the fall of our first parents was loss of immortality, condemnation to eternal death for the entire human race. Only the intervention of the Saviour rendered possible the restoration of man's original purity and immortality.

Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there could have been no hope for the fallen race had not God, by the sacrifice of His Son, brought immortality within their reach.—*Great Controversy*, p. 533.

The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, and has it not been for the goodness and mercy of God, would have plunged the race into hopeless despair.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61.

As related to the first Adam men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death, but Christ steps in and passes over the ground where Adam fell.—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

Sorrow filled heaven as it was realized that man was

lost, and that the world which God had created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness, and death, and that there was no way of escape for the offender. The whole family of Adam must die.—*Early Writings*, p. 126.

The world was under condemnation. Christ became substitute and surety for man.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 283.

Therefore Adam's posterity has ever come into the world inheriting fallen, sinful natures, evil propensities, and, apart from the Saviour, condemnation to eternal death.

III. THE NATURE OF CHRIST SPIRITUALLY AT BIRTH

According to E. G. White, Christ did not inherit at birth the fallen nature inherited by Adam's posterity. She makes it abundantly clear that in terms of heritage Christ was distinct from the posterity of Adam.

Because of sin his [Adam's] 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.—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128.

It is clear that if Christ had inherited the evil nature earned by Adam's fall He too would have been born in sin, under condemnation and, therefore, Himself in need of a Saviour (Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Rom. 5:12, 17-19). On the contrary E. G. White writes:

He was unsullied with corruption, a stranger to sin . . . He was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures.—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 508, 509.

IV. THE NATURE OF THE CONVERTED MAN SPIRITUALLY

In an effort to interpret E. G. White's statements some have posited that Christ was born with the spiritual nature of the converted man. His birth was a miracle. The Divine overshadowed the human as it does in the life of the converted soul and the resulting God-man was born with a converted nature. The difficulty with this interpretation is that the converted man retains "inherent propensities of disobedience" which must be constantly battled with. This is E. G. White's clear teaching.

Paul's sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he: "I die daily." His will and his desires every day

conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did the will of God however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature.—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 299.

Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies.—Christ's Object Lessons, p.331.

Meditate seriously upon these things, and then in the fear of God gird on the armor for a life conflict with hereditary tendencies, imitating none but the divine Pattern.—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 439.

Man has fallen; and it will be the work of a life-time, be it longer or shorter, to recover from that fall, and regain, through Christ, the image of the divine, which he lost by sin and continued transgression.—Ibid., vol. 2, p. 448.

V. THE SPIRITUAL SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S NATURE

By contrast Christ did not have propensities, inclinations, biases toward sin. He did not have that within His nature that predisposed Him toward sinning. He did not possess the passions and inner promptings which we are daily obliged to subject by the grace of God. E. G. White leaves us in no doubt on this question.

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 could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity.—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1128.

Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption.—Ibid., p. 1128.

His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin.—Ibid., p. 1104.

He was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points even as we are.—Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 509.

He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil.—Ibid., p. 202.

Is there any converted man today who would be prepared to claim that his spiritual nature is "free from every taint of sin" or that it is no longer necessary for him to battle with evil inclinations? Not even the great Apostle could make that claim. Then the spiritual nature of Christ was superior to that of the converted man.

As we have seen (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 448), the

converted man is being progressively restored to the image of God. This is the work of a lifetime. No genuinely converted man has ever claimed to be a perfect spiritual replica of the image of God. But according to E. G. White this is precisely what Christ was.

Not without hindrance was the Commander of heaven to win the souls of men to His kingdom. From the time when He was a babe in Bethlehem, He was continually assailed by the evil one. The image of God was manifest in Christ, and in the councils of Satan it was determined that He should be overcome.—Desire of Ages, p. 116.

Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God.—Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 739.

In an effort to defend the thesis that Christ was sanctified in the same sense that we are some would apply these statements to the Divine nature of Christ. Such references, they say, refer to Him as God but not as man. If this is so then the "nobility of character," the "mercy and tender pity," the "love and goodness" in the human Christ were something less than "the image of the invisible God." Then, part of Christ, the Deity part, was "the embodiment of divine perfection," but not the human part. Such an interpretation does violence to the language of the author. It was Christ, the God-man, who manifested "nobility of character," "mercy and tender pity," "love and goodness." It was this God-man who was "the image of the invisible God." The attempt to separate the natures in Christ at this point is something beyond the intention of E. G. White.

Therefore we conclude that since Christ was from birth the image of God, His spiritual nature was distinctly superior to that of the converted man who is being progressively restored to the image of God.

VI. PRESENT PERFECTION IN CHRIST

Although no Christian can claim to be perfect in the sense of "the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God," yet there is a sense in which the believer is regarded as perfect now.

At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.—Christ's Object Lessons, p.65.

This present perfection is not in view of our superior level of Christian growth, but in view of the imputation of Christ's righteousness. It is just as much the possession of the newly converted man as it is of the more mature Christian. E. G. White writes:

Jesus continues. . . . So I will be your representative in heaven. The Father beholds not your faulty character, but He sees you as clothed in My perfection. I am the medium through which Heaven's blessings shall come to you.—Desire of Ages, p. 357.

If the soul clothed in Christ's perfection should pass away he is saved, whatever stage he may have reached in the Christian walk. The Christian should not be living in a constant atmosphere of spiritual and psychological insecurity. Christ's merits are sufficient. On the other hand neither should we regard ourselves as having arrived spiritually, free from the necessity of daily striving to improve.

John enjoyed the blessing of sanctification. But, Mark, the apostle does not claim to be sinless; he is seeking perfection by walking in the light of God's countenance.—The Sanctified Life, p. 65.

The clearer their views of the greatness, glory and perfection of Christ, the more vividly will they see their own weakness and imperfection.—Ibid., p. 50.

VII. CHARACTER PERFECTION OF BELIEVERS AT THE LATTER RAIN

There are those who deny that character perfection is possible prior to the second coming of Jesus. E. G. White does not share this view. She writes:

The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain, and prepares it for the sickle. The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen the harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ.—Testimonies to Ministers, p.506.

As we have noted, E. G. White defines character as the thoughts and feelings which reveal themselves in conduct.—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 310; *Child Guidance*, p. 161. Christ's every thought, emotion and deed was sinless. Into this condition His people are to be brought by the latter rain. There is no intimation that our

faculties, powers and capacities are to be perfected. But the message is clearly that God's people will be brought into a state of character perfection like that of Christ in His human nature. Without attempting to relate the latter rain, the reception of the seal of God and the close of probation in terms of time, we quote here statements establishing the point under discussion:

Those who receive the seal of the living God, and are protected in the time of trouble, must reflect the image of Jesus fully.—Early Writings, p.71.

Christ declared of Himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." (John 14:30). . . . This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.—Great Controversy, p. 623.

By growing daily in the divine life, he (man) will not attain to the full stature of a perfect man in Christ until his probation ceases—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 367.

When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time.—Ibid., vol. 2, p. 355.

The Lord requires perfection from His redeemed family. He expects from us the perfection which Christ revealed in His humanity.—Child Guidance, p. 477.

The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life. . . . His character is to be ours.—Desire of Ages, p. 311.

VIII. BELIEVERS SPIRITUALLY PURIFIED AFTER CLOSE OF PROBATION

Although she describes the people of God, who have received the latter rain, as perfect in character E. G. White explicitly states that the specific purpose of the time of Jacob's trouble after the close of probation is that the saved might be purified. They have been perfected in the sense of delivered from all the acts of sin whether in the form of thought, feeling or action. There is nothing relative about the perfection of God's people in this sense. They are not relatively free from sinful behavior, but absolutely so. Yet there is still that within them that needs to be purified. Speaking of the experience of God's people during the time of Jacob's trouble E. G. White writes:

Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God's love for His children during the period of their severest trial, is as strong and

tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.—Great Controversy, p. 621.

Then after the latter rain and the close of probation, despite the fact that God's people are described as perfect in the sense of possessing the character of Christ, there is still "earthliness" within them which must be consumed by the fires of affliction. There is no suggestion that this earthliness consists of sinful behavior of any kind. On the contrary their sins have been eliminated in the sanctuary above and "they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment, and have been blotted out; and they cannot bring them to remembrance."—*Ibid.*, p. 620.

Great Controversy describes the plight, during the time of Jacob's trouble, of those whose moral powers prior to the latter rain have fallen short of what by God's grace was possible to them.

Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test, they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected, they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.—*Ibid.*, p. 622.

As we have noted, E. G. White describes the basis of character as "the mental and moral powers,"—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 606. By mental powers she does not mean intellectual ability, but capacity for knowing God.—*Child Guidance*, p. 161; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45. By moral powers she means the capacity for exercising faith, hope and love.—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 187. Although we cannot perfect these faculties, yet their improvement and our constant dependence upon Christ are the factors involved in character development.

The evidence would seem to suggest that even after God's people have been given complete victory over sinful behavior (thought, feelings, action) there remains the possibility of further development of these imperfect faculties of the soul, a further purifying of their natures so that the image of Christ may be as perfectly reflected in them as is possible this side of heaven.

There are Spirit of Prophecy statements which indicate that the measure of character development possible to the human Christ was something far in

advance of that possible to His people this side of heaven. For example:

Let every student and every worker study this again and again, that they, setting forth the Lord crucified among us, may make it a fresh subject to the people. Show that the life of Christ reveals an infinitely perfect character.—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 60.

The faith of men in Christ as the Messiah was not to rest on the evidences of sight, and they believe on Him because of His personal attractions, but because of the excellence of character found in Him, which never had been found, neither could be, in another.—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 904.

It might well be asked, are God's people given an infinitely perfect character prior to the second coming of Christ? The evidence would suggest not. E. G. White compares and contrasts our possible development with that of Christ.

He is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given resemble it.—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 549; cf. p. 169.

Why was a higher degree of character perfection possible to Christ than to us? The limiting factor is not the inability of God's people to refrain, by His grace, from committing acts of sin whether in the form of thought, feeling or action. The limiting factor is their inability to equal in a positive way the infinite character perfection of Christ, because their natures, faculties, mental and moral powers or capacities are still imperfect and remain so until the second coming of Jesus. Speaking of the work of Satan in tempting Christ and in tempting man, E. G. White says that he "can exercise his power upon the human family, who are far inferior in strength and wisdom to the Son of God, even after he had taken upon himself man's nature."—*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 299.

By comparison with Christ our powers are limited. We are told, "With our limited powers we are to be as holy in our sphere as God is holy in His sphere."—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 337.

It is the opinion of the present writer that the foregoing considerations provide for us the key to the interpretation of the following statements:

We cannot say, "I am sinless" till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot, or

wrinkle, or any such thing, complete in Christ, robed in His righteousness and perfection.—That I May Know Him, p. 361.

As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place, there is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained.—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 340.

It is clear from the foregoing that E. G. White did not intend to convey that the people of God will not attain to perfection of character in the sense of victory over sinful behavior prior to the Second Advent. Her meaning seems to be that as long as we retain these imperfect faculties, as long as our power are inferior, as long as our basic human natures show such evident results of the Fall, we cannot claim to be sinless. At the second coming of Jesus "the last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ's faithful ones will appear 'in the beauty of the Lord our God,' in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord."—*Great Controversy*, p. 645.

As sinless beings in heaven our character growth will continue throughout the eternal ages. "The efforts begun upon the earth will continue through eternity."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 520. "And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character of this life."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 332.

IX. NOTHING IN CHRIST NEEDED TO BE PURIFIED

E. G. White writes that at the second coming of Jesus "the last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed" from His people so that they might reflect "the perfect image of their Lord."—*Great Controversy*, p. 645. By contrast she speaks of Christ's condition while He was here on earth.

The life of Jesus was a life in harmony with God. While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him. Yet He was not exempt from temptation.—*Desire of Ages*, p. 71.

It is necessary for the last traces of sin to be removed from God's people at the second coming, after they have received the latter rain and have passed through the fiery trial of the time of Jacob's trouble. But in Jesus Christ there was no trace of sin, nothing in His spiritual nature to mar the "image of God within Him." There are many Spirit of Prophecy statements which unequivocally state that there was nothing in Christ that needed to be purified in the sense that God's people need to be purified. For example:

But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner.—*Ibid.*, p. 266.

He [Christ] was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man.—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 912.

The human nature of Christ was like not ours, and suffering was more keenly felt by Him; for His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin.—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 1104.

Christ is a perfect representation of God on the one hand, and a perfect specimen of sinless humanity on the other hand. Thus He has combined divinity and humanity.—*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 907.

X. SPIRITUALLY CHRIST STOOD IN ADAM'S POSITION

There can be no serious doubt that E. G. White teaches that Christ during the incarnation possessed the spiritual nature of Adam prior to the Fall. Although there are profound theological problems posed by this teaching, and although we find it difficult to accept that Christ in His human nature was any different to the rest of humanity, the conclusion is inescapable. E. G. White says:

Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam's failure.—*My Life Today*, p. 323.

Then Jesus did not begin where Adam began merely in regard to the nature of the temptations which He faced. He began where Adam began spiritually, "in purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God." This question was very amply considered by E. G. White in 1895. At that time she wrote a lengthy letter on the subject, excerpts from which are quoted here:

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 transgressing. 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. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden. . . . His birth was a miracle of God; . . . "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

These words do not refer to any human being, except to the Son of the infinite God. Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called "that holy thing." It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be. . . . 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.—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129.

The identity between the perfection of the spiritual nature of Adam and that of Christ is clearly established in this passage. And the contrast between the spiritual nature of Christ and that of the rest of humanity is carefully drawn. When E. G. White wrote, "Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ," she was not merely referring to the fact that He never chose to sin. In its context this statement refers to what Christ was at birth. It is an interpretation of the words of the angel, ". . . that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." These words apply to a human being but to only one human being. "These words do not refer to any human being except to the Son of the infinite God." The interpretation that the reference is to the Divine nature of Christ but not to His human nature fails to recognize that here as elsewhere E. G. White uses the title "Son of God" to apply not merely to the Divine nature of Christ but to the entire Being, the God-man Jesus Christ. It is quite apparent that the central

emphasis of the passage is that the Divine-human Christ was a Being unique in a sinful world in that His spiritual nature was as undefiled as was that of man prior to his fall into sin.

It is in the light of the passages already cited that the following statements should be considered:

Christ came to the earth, taking humanity and standing as man's representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that man, as God created Him, connected with the Father and the Son, could obey every divine requirement.—Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 253.

When Christ bowed His head and died, He bore the pillars of Satan's kingdom with Him to the earth. He vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory. The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature. The power of the Saviour's Godhead was hidden. He overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power.—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1108.

In the fullness of time He was to be revealed in human form. He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man. . . . In heaven was heard the voice, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord."—Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 912, 925.

XI. IN WHAT SENSE WAS CHRIST SANCTIFIED?

It may well be objected that during His earthly sojourn Christ was sanctified. What would be the point of sanctification if He were born with the spiritual nature possessed by Adam prior to the Fall? Did not Jesus Himself say, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth?" (John 17:19).

The Greek verb *hagiazo* does not necessarily imply a progressive growth in holiness. It may mean simply "consecrate," "dedicate." Thus the Revised Standard Version translates John 17:19, "And for their sakes I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth." This is one of the two senses in which E. G. White refers to Jesus Christ being sanctified.

"For their sakes," He said, speaking of His disciples, "I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified." John 17:19. The same devotion, . . . the same subjection to the claims of the word of God, that were manifest in Christ, must be seen in His servants.—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 142.

"For their sakes I sanctify Myself." I appropriate all My glory, all I am, to the work of man's redemption. How very

little are men moved now to sanctify themselves to the work of God that souls may be saved through them.—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 457.

In other passages E. G. White speaks of Christ being sanctified in the sense of growing in grace.

Jesus, considered as a man, was perfect, yet He grew in grace.—Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 339.

From the first dawning of intelligence He was constantly growing in spiritual grace and knowledge of truth.—The Desire of Ages, pp. 70.

"I sanctify Myself," He declared "that they also might be sanctified." John 17:19. So the Christian is to abide among men, that the savor of divine love may be as salt to preserve the world from corruption. Daily beset by temptation, constantly opposed by the leaders of the people, Christ knew that He must strengthen His humanity by prayer. In order to be a blessing to men, He must commune with God, pleading for energy, perseverance, and steadfastness. Thus He showed His disciples where His strength lay. Without this daily communion with God, no human being can gain power for service.—Counsels to Teachers, p. 323.

Without speculating as to the precise nature, of this growth in grace on the part of the incarnate Christ, it is interesting to note that E. G. White speaks of Adam prior to the Fall as having the possibility of developing spiritually beyond the point of perfection at which He was created. Like the incarnate Son of God, Adam possessed from the beginning a spotless nature and flawless character.

In what consisted the strength of the assault made upon Adam, which caused his fall? It was not indwelling sin; for God made Adam after His own character, pure and upright. There were no corrupt principles in the first Adam, no corrupt propensities or tendencies to evil.—SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1083.

God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil.—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 49.

Yet it was possible for Adam to grow spiritually.

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous.—Steps to Christ, p. 62.

We conclude then that Jesus Christ who "began where the first Adam began" (*My Life Today*, p. 323) succeeded in this spiritually maturing process thus demonstrating that there was no excuse for Adam's fall.

XII. DID CHRIST HAVE A SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGE OVER US?

The objection usually raised to E. G. White's teaching that during the incarnation Christ possessed the spiritual nature of Adam before the Fall is that if this were so He could not possibly be our example, since He had a distinct advantage over us. If Jesus did not have within His human nature the same promptings to sin that we have how could He sympathize with our struggle? Is it reasonable to uphold the example of the child Jesus to our children if He did not inherit the same fallen nature that is the portion of the rest of humanity? This is a pressing issue to which in a number of places E. G. White addresses herself.

First, it is forcefully stressed throughout the Spirit of Prophecy that no other human being has been obliged to endure such an intense spiritual conflict as did Christ.

Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befell human beings. Never another of woman born was so fiercely beset by temptation; never another bore so heavy a burden of the world's sin and pain. Never was there another whose sympathies were so broad or so tender. A sharer in all the experiences of humanity, He could feel not only for, but with, every burdened and tempted and struggling one.—Education, p. 78.

Second, we are told that Christ was tempted in proportion to His spiritual strength.

"He . . . suffered being tempted,"—suffered in proportion to the perfection of His holiness. But the prince of darkness found nothing in Him; not a single thought or feeling responded to temptation.—Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 422.

The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand. They were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours.—Desire of Ages, p. 116.

Third, Christ was tempted bearing the imputed guilt of the race.

With the terrible weight of the sins of the world upon Him, Christ withstood the test upon appetite, upon that love of the world, and upon that love of display which leads to presumption.—Ibid., p. 116.

The E. G. White statements usually quoted to prove that Christ inherited our fallen natures are often those found in her description of the wilderness of temptation experience. And in her account of this

event she especially emphasizes that the reason for the intensity of the struggle was that the sin, guilt, passion, depravity, infirmity of the entire race was laid upon, imputed to, vicariously borne by Christ at this time.

As soon as Christ entered the wilderness of temptation, His visage changed. The glory and splendor reflected from the throne of God which illuminated His countenance when the heavens opened before Him, and the Father's voice acknowledged Him as His Son in whom He was well pleased, was now gone. The weight of the sins of the world was pressing His soul, and His countenance expressed unutterable sorrow, a depth of anguish that fallen man had never realized. He felt the overwhelming tide of woe that deluged the world. He realized the strength of indulged appetite and of unholy passion that controlled the world, which had brought upon man inexpressible suffering. The indulgence of appetite had been increasing, and strengthening with every successive generation since Adam's transgression, until the race was so feeble in moral power that they could not overcome in their own strength.—Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 271.

The Saviour was tempted during a full forty day period. The three temptations recorded by Matthew and Luke were the three crowning temptations at the end of weeks of spiritual conflict. There is no suggestion that Christ's struggle was the result of His having inherited our fallen natures. The point rather is that our guilt, woe, "indulged appetite," and "unholy passion" were laid upon Him, so that in some mysterious sense He felt as the sinner feels. Then at the time of His greatest weakness Satan came with his masterful temptations.

The first paragraph on page 117 of *The Desire of Ages* is often quoted as evidence that Christ inherited our fallen natures.

Satan had pointed to Adam's sin as proof that God's law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation.—Desire of Ages, p. 117.

This passage is not referring to what Christ inherited at birth but to what was laid upon Him, imputed to Him. It follows immediately upon the statement that "with the terrible weight of the sins of the world upon Him, Christ withstood the test upon appetite, upon the love of the world, and upon that love of display which leads to presumption."—*Ibid.*, p. 116. As we have seen, Christ was not born deficient in "moral worth" or infirm or degenerate. A careful comparison of the accounts of the temptation in *Selected Messages* and *The Desire of Ages* reveals that in the wilderness experience Christ bore vicariously the accumulated guilt of the race, and was tempted bearing this enormous disadvantage.

Again in Gethsemane the guilt of the race was laid upon Christ and He was tempted bearing this handicap.

The conflict was terrible. Its measure was the guilt of His nation, of His accusers and betrayer, the guilt of the world lying in wickedness. The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life.—Ibid., p. 687.

In the wilderness of temptation and in Gethsemane, Christ might have died under the load of sin laid upon Him had it not been for the restorative ministrations of heavenly angels. Finally upon the Cross He paid the supreme sacrifice bearing the guilt of the entire world which had been laid upon Him. And prior to the His expiring cry Satan pressed in with his final effort to lead the Saviour to sin.

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.—Ibid., p. 753.

It is clear that in the experiences of the wilderness, Gethsemane and Calvary, Christ was an incalculable disadvantage in His conflict with Satan. The fact that

His own human nature was entirely sinless, the fact that He did not inherit our fallen condition was no advantage at all, since the guilt and degradation of the lost race were laid upon Him. But what about the remainder of His earthly existence? Did He have an advantage over children and youth, or was human guilt to some extent laid upon Him at these periods in life?

The account in *The Desire of Ages* of the baptism of Jesus provides a clue as to His condition prior to that event. Writing of the Father's acceptance of the Son, E. G. White declares:

From the open heavens a voice was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." These words of confirmation were given to inspire faith in those who witnessed the scene, and to strengthen the Saviour for His mission. Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ, notwithstanding the humiliation of taking upon Himself our fallen nature, the voice from heaven declared Him to be the Son of the Eternal.—Ibid., p. 112.

Bearing the weakness of humanity, and burdened with its sorrow and sin, Jesus walked alone in the midst of men. As the darkness of the coming trial pressed upon Him, He was in loneliness of spirit, in a world that knew Him not.—Ibid., p. 422.

The first of these two statements refers to the period prior to the wilderness of temptation experience, prior to the placing upon Christ at that time "the overwhelming tide of woe that deluged the world."—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 271. "The sins of a guilty world" are said to have been "laid upon Christ" before His baptism, for not withstanding that this has taken place He is acknowledged by the Father as His Son. The two phrases, "Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ" and "notwithstanding the humiliation of taking upon Himself our fallen nature" are in apposition. When Christ took our fallen nature the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Him. Then our sin was not His by heritage at birth. It was His only because He took it upon Himself. As E. G. White explains it, "He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature that He might know how to succor those that are tempted."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 181. This is not to say that Christ took our sinful human nature upon His sinless Divine nature. If this were the meaning of the statement it would be a contradiction of the many passages we have cited which clearly indicate that Christ's human nature was entirely sinless. The point rather is that upon His sinless Divine-human nature He

took our sinful nature. Sin was not injected into His nature. It was imputed to Him, laid upon Him.

At no stage in His earthly existence did Jesus have an advantage over us in the battle with sin. At every stage bearing to some degree the sins of a guilty world, and being tempted in proportion to His spiritual strength, Christ endured an infinitely fiercer conflict, "Never another bore so heavy a burden of the world's sin and pain."—*Education*, p. 78. By relying completely upon His Father for strength He retained sinlessness at each stage of development and in the end triumphed gloriously. Such is our Example.

XIII. A DIFFICULT PASSAGE CONSIDERED

There are certain E. G. White statements which, taken together in isolation from her other comments on the subject, would seem to teach that Christ inherited a fallen, sinful human nature. One representative passage is here discussed:

The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Rom. 11:33. We marvel at the Saviour's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence. Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension. 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.—Desire of Ages, pp. 48, 49.

There are a number of possible ways to interpret this passage. It is thought by some to teach that at birth Christ inherited a fallen, sinful nature. If this interpretation is correct then the statement is a clear contradiction of E. G. White passages cited earlier in this article. If Christ inherited a sinful nature undoubtedly He inherited all that goes with it, propensities to sin, moral degeneracy, the passions of our human, fallen nature. The Spirit of Prophecy teaches that Christ had none of these.

It might be argued that Christ did inherit a fallen nature but, because He was born of the Holy Spirit and

because His Divine nature overshadowed the fallen nature, free from propensities to sin, evil inclinations, the passions of our fallen nature. Because of the miraculous union of the Divine and the human in the womb of the virgin Mary, the child born could be described as "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35). But if this were so Christ did not inherit a fallen, sinful human nature. A man's natural heritage is what he possesses at birth. If, because of the miraculous overshadowing of His Divine nature, He were born without a taint of sin, a perfect example of sinless humanity, He did not inherit the type of nature that we inherit at birth. If this were so He inherited the type of human nature which, as we have seen, is to be the possession of God's people at the Second Advent. Then how could it be true that "He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity?"—*Desire of Ages*, p. 49.

Unless we are prepared frankly to admit that E. G. White contradicted herself we are obliged to interpret the passage some other way. The present writer believing in the inspiration of E. G. White accepts the second alternative. There can be no doubt that physically Jesus Christ was similar to His contemporaries. In this respect He accepted "the results of the working of the great law of heredity." Furthermore, as we have pointed out, Christ vicariously took upon His sinless Divine-human nature our guilt, infirmity and woe. Sin was not His by heritage. It was His by imputation. In this sense He accepted "the results of the working of the great law of heredity." But the fact remains that "His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1104.

XIV. CONCLUSION

There are two conflicting points of view currently held on the question of the relationship between the spiritual perfection of Christ and that of believers. One

view is that character perfection is impossible for the people of God this side of heaven. The other view is that before Jesus comes God's people will become, by the grace of the Lord, as perfect in spiritual nature and character as was Jesus Christ in His humanity. E. G. White espoused neither position. She categorically affirms that the purpose of the latter rain is to bring God's people to the perfection of the character of Christ in the sense that they are to be victorious over all acts of sin in thought, feeling and action. On the other hand she explicitly states that after the latter rain there is a work of purification to be done for the faithful which does not reach its ultimate fruition until the final traces of sin are eliminated from them at the second advent of Christ. Nowhere does she intimate that there were traces of sin which needed to be purged from the human Christ. On the contrary, she consistently depicts His human nature as entirely sinless. We conclude, therefore, that while it is God's intention for His people to come into perfect conformity to the character of Christ by gaining the victory over all sinful behavior, it is not possible for them in this life to achieve perfect equality with the human nature of Christ because of their possession, until the Second Advent, of faculties, powers, and capacities which result from man's fall into sin.

In the writing of E. G. White the emphasis is consistently placed on the goal of character perfection to be achieved by God's people. Those who are now faithfully, daily laying hold of the power of the Lord in an effort to overcome all sin and reflect the character of Jesus, are the ones who are being prepared for the greater latter rain gift of the Holy Spirit. This is not a time to haggle over pet theological theories, but a time to press together that by prayer, fellowship and witnessing we might be molded into the unified body of Christ ready to receive the Pentecostal outpouring of His Spirit.

Some Theological Considerations of Perfection

EDWARD HEPPENSTALL, Loma Linda University

I. BIBLICAL TEACHING ON PERFECTION

The truth about perfection in Christian doctrine and experience is that which does justice to the Biblical meaning and use of the word. The Bible teaches that the true Christian will grow both in grace and toward the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. He continually hungers and thirsts after righteousness. There is an earnest unashamed quest for spiritual holiness.

Since the Bible exhorts the believer in every age again and again to "be perfect," then obviously the experience it advocates is not something which lies beyond the experience of those to whom the Word was addressed. It must be possible within the framework of the Christian life here on earth, otherwise there would be no point to the Bible writers urging perfection upon believers. This exhortation belongs to believers in all ages and not only those who live just prior to the return of our Lord.

The only valid meaning to the words "perfect" and "perfection" is that which the Bible gives to it. It is therefore imperative that we study to grasp as far as possible the Scriptural meaning and use of perfection and avoid arbitrary interpretations of our own.

"TELEIOS"

The most important word translated "perfect" in the New Testament is the Greek word "teleios." This word is derived from the substantive "telos" usually rendered "goal," "purpose," "end." The word has in mind a definite state of spiritual development for Christians in all ages, for those living today. Almost invariably the word describes the achievement of spiritual maturity, a Christian stability form which one does not turn back, an unshakeable allegiance to the Living God.

Paul uses this word quite frequently when designated perfect or mature Christians in contrast with those who remain spiritual babes.

Do not be childish, my friends. Be as innocent as evil as babes, but as least be "grown up" [Teleioi] in your thinking. (1 Cor. 14:20, NEB).

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature [teleion], for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity [perfection—teleios] (Heb. 5:11-14; 6:1, RSV).

Here the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews recognizes there is a beginning to the Christian life. One must start with the ABCs of the Christian faith. As a new born babe he takes his spiritual food from other mature Christians. At this point the author is seriously concerned because many of these Christians are still wearing the mental and spiritual garments of childhood. They are not growing. At a time when they ought to be perfect (mature) enough to instruct and lead others into the Christian faith, they still have to be treated like children.

Paul also felt this way about some of the members of the Corinthian church. In 1 Cor. 2:6 he declares that he "speaks wisdom among the perfect" [teleioi] full grown; but then he adds:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Paul contrasts spiritual babes in the church with

those he designates as perfect or full grown mature believers. The immaturity referred to showed itself in the Corinthian church by their divisions, unfitting them to understand the deep things of God.

Paul declares that it should be the aim of every Christian minister from his day to our own to bring his flock to perfection, that is, to full maturity of Christian character, since God has provided these gifts to achieve this mature state in life.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [mature—teleios] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13).

Again, the purpose and goal is Christian maturity and stability, a strength of allegiance that cannot be shaken. Paul uses this word translated “perfect” in the King James Version to describe, not sinless perfection of these believers in the churches at Corinth and Ephesus, but a stage of spiritual maturity that marks those who are steadfast in the faith under all circumstances.

Again in his Epistle to the Philippians, he classes himself among the “perfect” or spiritually mature and speaks wisdom among the “perfect.”

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect [teleioi—mature] be thus minded (Phil. 3:13-15).

Because Paul has achieved this maturity, he is able to speak wisdom among the mature also. The aim of his apostolic ministry is to “present every man perfect [teleioi—full grown] in Christ” (Col. 1:28). He describes his fellow worker Epaphros as agonizing in prayer that the Colosian Christians may “stand perfect [teleioi] and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12).

In classical Greek this same word *teleios* is often used of persons who have reached adulthood, of animals full grown, of ripe fruit. For the Christian the ideal is Jesus Christ, a spiritual stature for which we must strive continually. The Word does not have in mind sinless perfection. The holiest saints, men like Paul, have been the first to declare their constant need of growth toward Christ, while affirming the sinfulness of their own

natures. The perfecting and maturing process continues as long as life itself. The growing Christian makes continual progress toward the ideal in Christ.

With all the Biblical counsel to be perfect, nowhere do we find the believer claiming to have reached sinless perfection even though he is designated as “perfect” [mature]. For such a claim is fraught with peril; not the least of which is a spiritual blindness that prevents one from being honest with oneself. There exists two opposite perils: Spiritual blindness and failing to be honest with oneself; the opposite, an easy tolerance toward sin.

From the Word of God it is this spiritual maturity and stability that is possible in this life. To teach from the Bible uses of this word that ultimate sinless perfection is possible to inherently sinful man here on earth is not supported by the Word of God, and is denied by the very nature of man himself. This does not deny that there is growth towards perfection. Sin does not reign, but it does remain in terms of the limitations of human nature as we know it on this earth. It takes into consideration, even after the close of probation, that as people grow old the arteries harden, the mental and physical systems slow down and therefore the responses are not what they were in the full strength of youth.

Furthermore, that the Biblical use of the word *teleios* or perfect does not have in mind ultimate sinless perfection is seen where frequently believers are declared “perfect” at the point of achieving some single step toward the ideal. “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect [teleios] man” (James 3:2). “Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect [teleios] and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:40). The perfect or mature man is described here as one who has complete control of his tongue, or who endures the trail of his faith without wavering. The believer who qualifies in any one of these is designated in Scripture as a “perfect” or mature Christian. Such control and stability is proof enough that he is a mature, perfect, stable Christian. The achievement is not the same in all Christians. In some this “perfection” is marked by love for one’s enemies (Matt. 5:43-48), in others it is manifest in endurance and faithfulness under trial; in still others, it is seen in the control of the tongue.

In other words, the purpose of God in the life is spiritual maturity under all circumstances. Christ gave Himself to save us, the Holy Spirit to live in the believer that he might rise and grow to this Christian maturity. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath

begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

Paul, while asserting that Christ lived in him as a mature Christian, pressed ever forward to a loftier goal. Toward his goal the Holy Spirit continues to direct us through the whole of our lives. But there is no finality in perfection in this probationary life. For each upward step reveals spiritual heights still above us. The Christian’s privilege is to experience here and now what has been the privilege of Christians in all ages, namely the power of the Holy Spirit for continued growth and spiritual maturity. “Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.” Yet along with this continued growth, we find rest amid toil and conflict as we travail in this body of sin and death until the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“KATARTIZO”

The second most important word translated “perfect” in the New Testament is the Greek word *katartizo*. It means to be “fully equipped” for service in the work of the church and in the cause of God. Take note that Paul and other Bible writers are addressing the people of their own day and not simply those who were to live during the closing days of earth’s history. In the following passages of Scripture this word is used.

A disciple is not beyond his teacher, but everyone that is PERFECT [fully equipped] shall be as his master (Luke 6: 14).

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be PERFECT [fully equipped], be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you (2 Cor. 13:11).

May God PERFECT [fully equip] you in every good thing, in order to do His will (Heb. 13:21).

The God of all grace . . . after that ye have suffered a while, make you PERFECT [equip you], establish, strengthen, settle you (1 Peter 5: 10).

And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the PERFECTING [full equipping] of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11, 12).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be PERFECT [fully equipped] thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Whatever interpretation we give on the doctrine of

perfection must be in harmony with the Word of God or else it is false. E. G. White insists on it, even for her own writings. In the following quotation she says:

Brother J would not confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light God has given through the Testimonies: an addition to the Word of God. . . God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His Word, to give them a clearer understanding of it.—Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 663.

The written Testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed. . . The testimonies are not to belittle the Word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all.—Ibid., p. 665.

If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20).

II. THE CLOSE OF PROBATION AND SALVATION BY GRACE

What does the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach concerning the close of probation? Some would have us believe that the merits of the atonement are no longer available as they were prior to the close of probation. That the cessation of Christ’s intercession means that His saving power and forgiving grace are no longer available or needed. What does Rev. 22:11 actually mean relative to the close of probation? Consider various Bible translations of this verse:

New English Bible: “Meanwhile, let the evil-doer go on doing evil and the filthy-minded wallow in his filth, but let the good man persevere in his goodness and the dedicated man be true to his dedication.”

American Translation: “Let the evil-doer do worse and worse, let the base grow baser and baser, let the upright man be more and more upright, and the man who is holy be more and more holy.”

Phillips: “Let the wicked man continue his wickedness and the filthy man his filthiness; let the good man continue his good deeds and the holy man continue his holiness.”*

Good News for Modern Man: “Whoever is evil must go on doing evil, and whoever is filthy must go on being filthy; whoever is good must go on doing good, and whoever is holy must go on being holy.”

The context of this verse in the book of Revelation is that man has been confronted with the final messages, warnings, and judgments of God. By these God has addressed all the peoples of the world and

brought to bear the most solemn words and actions upon man's sinful situation. This verse in the last chapter defines the final attitudes of two great classes of mankind, the saved and the lost. Beyond the close of probation, man's eternal destiny is forever fixed. It is now too late to change.

The key word in the verse is the Greek word "eti" translated "still." He that persists in wickedness will do so still. He that clings to this filthiness will do so still. He that has chosen the way of Christ's righteousness will do so still. For the wicked, there will be no further help from God to turn him from his evil ways. The word "still" proclaims the finality of the choices that men have made. He that is filthy let him pollute himself yet more. In each case, while the one sinks to greater depths of evil, the righteous rise to greater heights of holiness. The close of probation is that decisive moment of time, when all that has gone into the making of men's lives will have determined their final destiny, to be wicked or righteous forever. If a man has loved evil to this point, then he must continue in it. God has no further provision for him to change. The Holy Spirit has been withdrawn from the wicked. Therefore change is impossible. For when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, there is no chance to resist the evil within the heart or the Satanic forces without. The man is totally enslaved forever.

But the righteous have been freed from sin's slavery forever. Because they have chosen Christ, all opportunity and all gracious help from God will be given them to continue in the way of righteousness. The text speaks of the permanent bent of the life. The wicked are now beyond redemption. The righteous cannot be lost. The text does not speak of sinlessness. It speaks only of finality one way or another. For the lost, their sinfulness will increase more and more. For the saved, their holiness will increase more and more.

Mrs. White declares that probation closes for some every day. "Every day the probation of some is closing."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 140. "Some are closing their probation; and is it well with them? Have they obtained a fitness for the future life?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 18. The question is not one of the maximum of sin's development on the one hand or the arrival at sinlessness on the other. Those for whom probation closes now involves increased wickedness and continuance in it, and for the righteous increased growth in righteousness and continuance in it. The issue is one of finality. So will it be when probation closes for all the world.

Speaking of the close of probation for the world, Mrs. White writes: "Every case is decided either for salvation or destruction."—*Early Writings*, p. 36; "The destiny of all will have been decided for life or death."—*Great Controversy*, p. 490. (See also *Desire of Ages*, p. 636.) It is too late to change. The character is fixed. "The coming of Christ does not change our characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 466. "Mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth."—*Great Controversy*, p. 613.

The righteous manifest an unshakeable allegiance to Christ. "The final test has been brought upon the world and all who have *proved themselves loyal* to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above."—*Ibid.*, p. 613. (Italics supplied.)

To live without a Mediator does not mean to live without the righteousness of Christ, or without the Holy Spirit, or the saving grace of our Lord. Since all cases are decided for weal or for woe, the work of our divine Advocate is concluded. No further charges by Satan can be brought against the saints, for Christ has answered them all. The cases of the saints have all been called to the bar of heaven. Christ has successfully pleaded our cause and secured a judgment in our favor. Nothing can now reverse that verdict. There is nothing more to say. Excepting Satan and his host, there is perfect agreement throughout the universe as to Christ's verdict in favor of the saints. All questions have been answered regarding the future of the saints. No member of the Godhead needs to make any further defense on their behalf. All that remains is for Christ to return and for the saints to live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

Because of their unchangeable irrevocable standing before God, there is no further need for Christ to intercede with God for their salvation or for their redemption. The saints have been declared the legal heirs to the new earth. Their standing from henceforth is one of final justification and vindication before the bar of God and before a sinless universe. The fact that they have chosen without qualification, the righteousness of Christ, leaves only the actual conferring of that sinless nature and entrance into their eternal inheritance at the second coming of Christ, when this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruption shall have put on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:52-54).

As we have clearer views of Christ's spotless and infinite purity, we shall feel as did Daniel, when he beheld the glory of the Lord, and said, "My comeliness was turned in me into corruption." We cannot say "I am sinless," till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body. But if we constantly seek to follow Jesus, the blessed hope is ours of standing before the throne of God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, complete in Christ, robed in His righteousness and perfection.—Signs of the Times, March 23, 1888.

III. THE SAINTS' CONDITION AND EXPERIENCE

What is the spiritual condition of the saints after the close of probation? Do the saints in any way reflect any conditions that belong to a state of sin? If so, is the atoning blood and merits of Christ still available?

Mrs. White describes the experience of the saints during the time of Jacob's trouble as having "a deep sense of their short-comings, and as they review their lives, their hopes will sink. . . . If the people of God had *unconfessed* sins to appear before them . . . they would be overwhelmed, despair would cut off their faith. . . . But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they will have *no concealed wrongs* to reveal."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 202. (Italics supplied.)

As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness will be severely tested. . . . They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness.—*Great Controversy*, p. 618.

Speaking of the saints in the time of trouble, Mrs. White writes:

Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions . . . and even if they endure the test, they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected, they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.—*Ibid.*, p. 622.

It was by self surrender and confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. . . . Thus it will be with those who live in the last days. As dangers surround them, and despair seizes upon the soul, they must depend solely upon the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. None will ever perish while they do this.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 202, 203.

Two facts come clear from Mrs. White's statements:

first, even some of the saints will find themselves lacking in faith after probation closes which will create for them greater anguish and conflict. But lack of faith belongs to a state of sin. "Lack of love and faith are the great sins of which God's people are now guilty."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 475. Certainly lack of love and faith do not belong to a sinless state. For this lack of faith was an essential aspect of the original sin of Adam and Eve. Obviously this very condition described by Mrs. White denies the claim that the saints will have reached sinless perfection. If the saints are really sinless, and free from what some call "original sin," how is it possible for them to reveal such inadequacy in faith? Such a claim is nowhere in the purview of Mrs. White's statements at all. The issue she sets forth has to do with "unconfessed sins," "concealed wrongs."

Second, salvation by grace and the merits of Christ's atonement still avails for the saints after probation closes. Believers still trust in the merits of Christ. The distinction some try to make between saving and sustaining grace before and after the close of probation is wholly unscriptural. The Bible knows nothing of it. Whatever may be meant by saving and sustaining grace, they do not come in separate packages, one before the close of probation and the other after, or that saving grace is for sinners and sustaining grace is for the sinless. Both are available at any time in the Christian life until the day of our Lord's coming.

The Biblical use of the word "grace" is one. Grace is the eternal and free favor of God, manifested towards the guilty and the unworthy. Grace is entirely apart from every supposition of human worth and sinless perfection. Grace belongs where human sinfulness exists. It superabounds over human unworthiness as experienced by the saints even after the close of probation. Sinners are the only persons with whom saving grace is concerned. Let us distinguish between grace as an attribute of Christ and grace as a method of salvation made possible by the sacrifice of Christ.

The limited and imperfect spiritual condition of the saints described by Mrs. White, requires the application of the atoning merits of our Lord and the availability of Christ's righteousness. The state of the saints is described as weakness, insufficiency, and unworthiness. The corruption of the sinful nature is manifest in the saints while in this mortal body. Consequently, during the time of Jacob's trouble, fear and trembling, weakness and unworthiness reflect their own insufficiency and sinful state. Yet the eternal God

is their refuge. Every moment they live by and are saved by God's marvelous grace. There is no evidence anywhere in Scripture or in the Spirit of Prophecy that indicates the slightest change in salvation by grace ministered daily to the saints.

Even after Christ's work of intercession ceases and all cases have been decided God is not one step removed from us. Rather is He closer than He has ever been. If God's righteousness in Christ is available, then so is His saving grace. The implication that Christ is somehow, by the cessation of His mediatorial ministry, standing in a different relation to His people, is false. Those who think otherwise fail to grasp the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace beyond the close of probation. Paul gave it to us in 2 Cor. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." What Paul experienced is no different for us today or any time prior to the coming of Christ.

Lurking uncomfortably near, beneath the false teaching on sinless perfection, is, that somehow this saving grace is not needed, that one must really have sinless perfection to be sure. This has always been the problem for those who will not settle for the acknowledgment of their actual sinful state. With the close of probation, suddenly we see our own strength turned around, converted into weakness as Mrs. White describes it, in order that we may no longer live as a law unto ourselves, but that there is a people who live by Christ alone. The experience of the saints after probation closes reveals conclusively that being saved is being shaken loose from the folly of implanting our ego firmly in the center. In spite of their claims to the contrary, the supporters of the sinless perfection doctrine clutch at it so that their weakness and unworthiness may end in power prior to the coming of Christ.

Salvation by grace is not a cure at all. The work of grace is not some magic charm. The apostle Paul learned that. It is not something that, with the close of probation, will guarantee that we will never have another spiritual problem. This is evident from Mrs. White's description of the state of the saints. Saving grace summons the saints to acknowledge their sinful state until the coming of Christ. Christ is saying to us, there is no way out, except to learn that His grace is sufficient in the midst of our weakness and sinful state.

What is sure about our finality after probation closes is not that our lives are now magically transformed into sinlessness above the strife and agony in the world and

the attacks on the enemy. What does come through is that deliverance is made complete in our weakness. His grace does not spring us free from the weakness of our sinful state. Faith brings God's assurance and saving power in our weakness. But it is His strength and power, not our own. One cannot have it both ways. If a man is sinless then he is no longer under grace. If he is under grace, then it is because he is not yet sinless.

A word from Mrs. White may well deserve consideration as to improper methods and teachings.

There are those who pick out from the Word of God, and also from the Testimonies, detached paragraphs or sentences that may be interpreted to suit their ideas, and they dwell upon these, and build themselves up in their own positions, when God is not leading them.

You will take passages in the Testimonies that speak of the close of probation, of the shaking among God's people, and you will talk of a coming out from this people of a purer, holier people that will arise. Now all this pleases the enemy. We should not needlessly take a course that will make differences, or create dissension. We should not give the impression that if our particular ideas are not followed, it is because the ministers are lacking in comprehension and in faith, and walking in darkness.— Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 179.

IV. "THEN SHALL THE SANCTUARY BE CLEANSED"

"And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14).

Let it be noted from the text and the Scriptural passage that the cleansing of the Sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 in no way can be identified with the human heart and mind. This sanctuary and this cleansing has nothing to do with the cleansing of human hearts and lives as some declare. Such a view is in complete contradiction with Mrs. White's clear statement on "What is the Sanctuary" in *Great Controversy*, pp. 409-422. She states this sanctuary to be the "true tabernacle" in heaven, to which the earthly sanctuary pointed.— *Great Controversy*, p. 417. That some teachers are in error is obvious from the fact that: in Daniel 8, the defiling of the heavenly sanctuary is by the little horn in its taking away of the daily. The little horn treads down the sanctuary and the host.

How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? (Dan. 8:13).

The answer to that is given in verse 14, "Unto 2300 days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

The doctrine of sinless perfection is often based on this false interpretation of the "cleansing" of the sanctuary and the final atonement. If sinless perfection is to be realized by saints at the close of probation, then original sin must also be eradicated. This is done by making "sins of ignorance" (Lev. 4) the equivalent of original sin which the final cleansing takes care of.

Both the Hebrew meaning of the word and the Biblical context show how mistaken the advocates of such a view are in the use of Scripture. The words "sins of ignorance" refer to sins done inadvertently, unwittingly. (See Deut. 19:4; Josh. 20:3, 5; Num. 35:11, 15; Lev. 22:14). The Old Testament use of the term

covers those inadvertent sins in contrast with those done with a high hand or defiantly. They have nothing to do with sin in the unconscious and man's natural state of sinfulness. The term "sins of ignorance" is far removed in time and meaning from any reference to original sin of the saints living in the last days.

We must be on our guard and much in prayer for divine guidance lest we come under the judgment of Christ when He said, "Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29).

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Outline Studies on Christian Perfection and Original Sin

ROBERT W. OLSON, Pacific Union College

The word "perfect" as it appears in the King James Version of the Bible does not always have the same meaning. The same is true of the words "perfect" or "perfection" as found in the writings of Mrs. E. G. White. Note the different usages of this term:

I. A NEWLY CONVERTED PERSON IS SAID TO BE PERFECT

(a) Rom. 4: 3-7. His iniquities are covered, he is declared righteous.

(b) Jer. 31:34. "I will remember their sin no more."

(c) "If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

(d) "Through the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, we may stand before God pure and spotless, our sins atoned for and pardoned. . . . The redeemed sinner, clothed in the robes of Christ's righteousness, may stand in the presence of a sin-hating God, made perfect by the merits of the Saviour."—*Signs of the Times*, March 15, 1905, p. 9.

(e) In this sense the thief on the cross was perfect after he accepted Christ. "He who enters heaven must have a character that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Naught that defileth can ever enter there. In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 144.

II. A GROWING CHRISTIAN IS CALLED PERFECT

(a) Gen. 6:9. Noah was perfect. It should be noted, however, that Noah committed a sinful act while in this "perfect" state. Gen. 9:21. Noah was himself responsible for the sin of drunkenness. "The pen of inspiration,

true to its task, tells us of the sins that overcame Noah, Lot, Moses, Abraham, David, and Solomon, and that even Elijah's strong spirit sank under temptation during his fearful trial. . . ."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 12.

(b) Phil. 3:15. "Let us . . . as many as be perfect. . ."

(c) "At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 65.

III. THE CHRISTIAN WHO DOES NOT SIN, EVEN BY A THOUGHT, IS PERFECT

(a) Phil. 3: 12, 13, Paul had not achieved this state. "The apostle himself was endeavoring to reach the same standard of holiness which he set before his brethren."—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 86.

(b) Matt. 5: 48. Jesus told us that we should strive to attain this perfection. "Christ presents before us the highest perfection of Christian character, which throughout our lifetime we should aim to reach. 'Be ye therefore perfect,' He says, 'even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Concerning this perfection, Paul writes; 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after.'"—*That I May Know Him*, p. 130.

(c) Such a spiritual state is actually attainable.

(1) Jude 24; 1 Cor. 10: 13; II Cor. 10:5.

(2) "Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us."—*Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

(3) "We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 144.

(4) "If you will stand under the bloodstained

banner of Prince Emmanuel, faithfully doing His service, you need never yield to temptation; for One stands by your side who is able to keep you from falling."—*Our High Calling*, p. 19.

(5) "There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God."—*Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

(6) "The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion can not overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness."—*Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1913.

(7) "Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all His precepts."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

(8) "We need not retain one sinful propensity."—*Ibid.*, 7, p. 943.

(9) "Through the plan of redemption, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong."—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 82.

(d) Some in every generation since Adam have reached the spiritual state where they lived without sinning.

(1) "Some few in every generation from Adam resisted his [Satan's] every artifice and stood forth as noble representatives of what it was in the power of man to do and to be—Christ working with human efforts, helping man in overcoming the power of Satan. Enoch and Elijah are the correct representatives of what the race might be through faith in Jesus Christ if they chose to be. Satan was greatly disturbed because these noble, holy men stood untainted amid the moral pollution surrounding them, perfected righteous characters, and were accounted worthy for translation to heaven."—*Review and Herald*,

March 3, 1874.

(2) "The case of Daniel was presented before me. Although he was a man of like passions with ourselves, the pen of inspiration presents him as a faultless character. His life is given us as a bright example of what man may become even in this life, if he will make God his strength and wisely improve the opportunities and privileges within his reach."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 569. "Stand like Daniel, that faithful statesman, a man whom no temptation could corrupt."—*Christ's Object Lessons, Lessons*, p. 332.

(e) There are likely some people living today who never sin, even by a thought. "In every phase of your character-building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day."—*Ibid.*, p. 332.

(f) those who may be living in this perfect state of holiness are unaware of it.

(1) "No one who claims holiness is really holy. Those who are registered as holy in the books of heaven are not aware of the fact and are the last ones to boast of their own goodness."—*Signs of the Times*, February 26, 1885, p. 128.

(2) "Those who are really seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless."—*Sanctified Life*, p. 7.

(3) "The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

(4) "The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heart-breaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561.

(g) All of God's people who live beyond the close of probation must reach this state of perfection.

(1) "The godly character of this prophet [Enoch] represents the state of holiness

which must be attained by those who shall be 'redeemed from the earth' at the time of Christ's second advent."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 88, 89. (See also *Review and Herald*, July 31, 1888.)

- (2) "Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. . . . This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble."—*Great Controversy*, p. 623.
- (3) "Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us—the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare, 'It is finished.'"—*Our High Calling*, p. 150.

(h) The last person converted will reach the same standard as those of longer experience. "As we near the close of this earth's history, we either rapidly advance in Christian growth, or we rapidly retrograde toward the world."—*Review and Herald*, December 13, 1892, p. 770. "What we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a few months."—*Early Writings*, p. 67.

(i) It is the latter rain of the Holy Spirit which (1) perfects the righteous completely, (2) prepares them to live without an Intercessor during the seven last plagues, and (3) fits them for translation. Note the following quotes:

- (1) "As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 509.
- (2) "It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 353; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 984. "They have received 'the latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' and they are prepared for the trying hour before them."—*Great Controversy*, p. 613. "At that time the 'latter rain,' or 'refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out."—*Early Writings*, p. 86. "They have passed through

the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; . . . they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments."—*Great Controversy*, p. 649. (3) "Near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain. . . ."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55. "They will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 187.

IV. THOSE WHO HAVE ALL INHERITED PROPENSITIES TO EVIL REMOVED ARE PERFECT

(a) We will not have this perfection until the second coming of Jesus. I Cor. 15:50-55; Phil. 3: 20, 21. "There is no end to the warfare this side of eternity."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 20. "So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 560.

(b) See E. G. White quotations in accompanying paper on "Original Sin," questions 7 and 8.

V. IN HEAVEN THE SAINTS WILL CONSTANTLY BECOME MORE HOLY (OR PERFECT)

(a) "Through ceaseless ages to advance in wisdom, in knowledge, and in holiness, ever exploring new fields of thought, ever finding new wonders and new glories, ever increasing in capacity to know and to enjoy and to love, and knowing that there is still beyond us joy and love and wisdom infinite,—such is the objective to which the Christian's hope is pointing."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 55.

(b) "In heaven we are continually to improve."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 101.

(c) "As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase."—*Great Controversy*, p. 678.

(d) "'Christ in you, the hope of glory' Colossians 1:27. A knowledge of this mystery furnishes a key to every other. It opens to the soul the treasures of the universe, the possibilities of infinite development."—*Education*, p. 172.

(e) "Forever and forever new views of the perfection and glory of Christ will appear."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 134.

HOW TO BE PERFECT

All our perfection, from first to last, has its origin in Christ. "So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love,—this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 70, 71.

"The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end."—*Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

ORIGINAL SIN

I. What Do We Mean by the Term "Original Sin"?

This expression refers to the effect which Adam's sin had upon the human family. The Bible never uses the term. E. G. White uses the phrase only with reference to Adam's first act of disobedience: "Every sin committed awakens the echoes of the original sin."—*Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901. Nowhere does she attempt to give a theological definition of "original sin" but she does comment on the subject in various books and articles.

II. How Do the Bible Writers Explain the Effect of Adam's Sin on His Descendants?

(a) 1 Cor. 15:22. "In Adam all die."

(b) Rom. 5: 12. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." (New American Standard Bible).

(c) Rom. 5:19. "Many were made sinners" (KJV, RSV, NASB). "The whole race was rendered sinful" (TCNT).

(d) Gal. 5: 17, "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in

opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (NASB).

(e) Eph. 2: 3. "We all lived like that in the past, and followed the impulses and imaginations of our evil nature, being in fact under the wrath of God by nature, like everyone else" (Phillips).* "By nature children of wrath" (KJV, RSV).

(f) Ps. 51: 5. "In sin did my mother conceive me."

Note the results of Adam's sin insofar as it pertains to us: (1) we were made sinners, (2) we must die, and (3) we are basically evil and are not able to do the things we please.

III. How Does Mrs. White Explain the Problem of "Original Sin"?

Mrs. White's comments are in perfect harmony with the Bible but they are given in much greater detail. Adam's sin is said to affect us in the same three ways: (1) we are born in a state of guilt inherited from Adam, (2) we must die as a consequence of this condition, and (3) we are born with natural tendencies to evil. Note the following quotations:

(1) On Guilt:

"As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

(2) On Death:

"The whole family of Adam must die."—*Early Writings*, p. 149. "In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave."—*Great Controversy*, p. 544.

We inherit guilt from Adam so that even a baby that dies a day after birth needs a Saviour though the child never committed a sin of its own. There will be children taken to heaven who died before the age of accountability (*Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 260) but they do not deserve this reward. Their entrance into the kingdom is based entirely on the merits of Jesus. They never sinned but they inherited a state of guilt from Adam, and so need a Saviour.

A child is not guilty of sin on its own account until it chooses to do wrong by an action of its own will. "The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can exercise his power upon us."—*Desire of Ages*, p. 125. "His own consent

must first be gained.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 177. “Transgression is our own act.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 421. “Children . . . are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins.”—*Ibid.*, p. 306.

So children, at birth, are doomed to die not as a punishment for their own sins or their own sinful condition, but rather as a consequence of Adam’s sin.

(3) On Propensities to Evil:

(a) “Because of sin his [Adam’s] posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128.

(b) “In order to understand this matter aright, we must remember that our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable of ourselves to pursue a right course.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 163.

(c) “To a large degree Satan has succeeded in the execution of his plans. Through the medium of influence, taking advantage of the action of mind on mind, he prevailed on Adam to sin. Thus at its very source human nature was corrupted. And ever since then sin has continued its hateful work, reaching from mind to mind. Every sin committed awakens the echoes of the original sin.”—*Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901.

(d) “The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Cooperation with that power is man’s greatest need.”—*Education*, p. 29.

(e) “Bad habits are more easily formed than good habits, and the bad habits are given up with more difficulty. The natural depravity of the heart accounts for this well-known fact—that it takes far less labor to demoralize the youth, to corrupt their ideas of moral and religious character, than to engraft upon their character the enduring, pure, and uncorrupted habits of righteousness and truth. Self-indulgence, love of pleasure, enmity, pride, self-esteem, envy, jealousy, will grow spontaneously, without example and teaching. In our present fallen state all that is needed is to give up the mind and character to its natural tendencies. In the natural world, give up a field to itself and you will see it covered with briars and thorns; but if it yields precious grain or beautiful flowers, care and unremitting labor

must be applied.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 195.

(f) Even the holiest of men possess these evil propensities. “Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their nature.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561. This sinful state is to be acknowledged in detail to Christ alone. “God will be better glorified if we confess the secret, inbred corruption of the heart to Jesus alone than if we open the recesses to finite, erring man.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 645. This is not a confession of any known sin for which we seek forgiveness but an acknowledgment of our sinful nature.

IV. How Can a Sinner Acquire Tendencies to Right in Place of His Tendencies to Wrong?

(a) “God makes no compromise with sin. A genuine conversion changes hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1101.

(b) “The old nature, born of blood and the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The old ways, the hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up; for grace is not inherited. The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. When men who claim to be Christians retain all their natural defects of character and disposition, in what does their position differ from that of the worldling? They do not appreciate the truth as a sanctifier, a reformer. They have not been born again.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1101.

V. How Completely Can We Be Changed From Evil to Good?

(a) “If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

(b) “Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.”—*Ibid.*, p. 664.

(c) “Those only who through faith in Christ obey all

of God’s commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all His precepts.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

(d) “We must learn of Christ. 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.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 943.

VI. Are Our Inbred Propensities to Wrong ELIMINATED or Are They SUBDUED and CONQUERED Through Christ’s Help?

(a) “The propensities that control the natural heart must be subdued by the grace of Christ, before fallen man is fitted to enter heaven.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 273.

(b) “Christ came to this world and lived the law of God, that man might have perfect mastery over the natural inclinations which corrupt the soul. . . . Man may stand conqueror of himself, conqueror of his own inclinations.”—*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 130, 131.

(c) “‘Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation’ (Mark 14:38). Watch against the stealthy approach of the enemy, watch against old habits and natural inclinations, lest they assert themselves; force them back, and watch. Watch the thoughts, watch the plans, lest they become self-centered.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 279.

VII. Will We, in This Life, Ever Be Free! From the Struggle Against Our Natural Inclinations?

(a) “From the cross to the crown there is earnest work to be done. There is wrestling with inbred sin; there is warfare against outward wrong. The Christian life is a battle and a march. Let us go forward; for we are striving for an immortal crown. Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure. We shall triumph at last, if we do not become weary in well-doing.”—*Review and Herald*, November 29, 1887.

(b) “Each soul inherits certain unchristlike traits of character. It is the grand and noble work of a lifetime to keep under control these tendencies to wrong. . . . So long as we are in the world, we shall meet with adverse influences. There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in the right spirit that

the Christian graces are developed. If Christ dwells in us, we shall be patient, kind, and forbearing, cheerful amid frets and irritations. Day by day and year by year we shall conquer self, and grow into noble heroism.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 231.

VIII. When Will Our Warfare Against Our Sinful Tendencies Finally Be Ended? When Will These Tendencies Be Completely Removed or Eliminated?

(a) I Cor. 15:50-55. This corruptible will put on incorruption at the last trump.

(b) Phil. 3:20, 21. This vile body (which includes our mind) will be changed at the second advent.

(c) “We cannot say ‘I am sinless,’ till this vile body is changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body.”—*Signs of the Times*, March 23, 1888.

(d) “There are hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil that must be overcome. Appetite and passion must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. There is no end to the warfare this side of eternity.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 20.

(e) “So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of life-long obedience.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561.

(f) “The redeemed will be welcomed to the home that Jesus is preparing for them. There their companions will not be the vile of earth, liars, idolaters, the impure, and unbelieving; but they will associate with those who have overcome Satan and through divine grace have formed perfect characters. Every sinful tendency, every imperfection, that afflicts them here has been removed by the blood of Christ, and the excellence and brightness of His glory, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, is imparted to them.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 126.

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