

# THE HUMAN NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST

## PRELAPSARIANS VERSUS POSTLAPSARIANS

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The Bible informs us that Jesus Christ is a divine-human being. But in His earthly life, how much was revealed as divine and how much as human? What kind of human nature did He actually receive? This topic has divided those called *prelapsarians* from *postlapsarians*, two compound terms that come from *lapsus*, a Latin word meaning “slip” or “fall.” Thus, the *prelapsarians* understand that the Son of God received an impeccable human nature like Adam’s before the fall. And the *postlapsarians* believe that His human nature is as sinful as the one we inherit from Adam after the fall.

Why is this issue important? Because our understanding of what God expects of us and His church depends upon our understanding of the human nature of Christ. Indeed, the mission of Christ and His church in the history of the great controversy between good and evil is affected for better or worse by how we understand Him who was, is, and will be the Son of God.

“We are to look at His life, study His character, and copy the pattern. What Christ was in His *perfect humanity*, we must be; for we must form characters for eternity” (*TM* 173).

### **A progressive understanding**

No one can be truly Christian if they do not know Jesus Christ. Eternal life itself depends on our knowledge of Him. Therefore, Jesus’ greatest longing is that we know Him well. He expressed it in His priestly prayer for His disciples. “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

But it is impossible to encompass with our human limitations the full dimension of what the person of Jesus Christ means. That is why we must begin by recognizing that our knowledge of the Son of God will always be limited. And yet God requires us to grow constantly in that knowledge, for the study of His life and character will always be progressive in this life and in all eternity.

So before we address the implications of prelapsarian and postlapsarian interpretations, let me share some statements from the Spirit of Prophecy which show us the infinite dimension of this topic. This will help us perhaps, to be more open and humble as we consider how others see the human nature of Jesus. For this reason, the burden of this work will be to expose the reasons that lead us to look at Jesus as we do. Let us look at some statements.

“The study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth” (1 *SM* 244). “The character of Christ must be understood, before men could love him, and view the cross with the eye of faith. Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity” (*LP* 125).

“This earth has been honored and blessed with the presence of the Son of God. In the Scriptures we read of His incarnation, His teaching, His miracles, His death, and His resurrection. The effort to understand these wonderful subjects puts to the tax the highest powers of the mind, and then *there is an infinity beyond which can not be exhausted. The oftener the mind is called to this study, the stronger and clearer it will become.* In the daily life will be revealed the mysteries of godliness, which may be experienced, but can not be explained. *Throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity the redeemed will study these subjects, ever gaining from them a deeper and clearer knowledge of God and of Christ*” (*ST*, April 26, 1905 par. 1).

## PRELAPSARIAN POSTULATES

Let us begin by considering the prelapsarian interpretation of the human nature of Christ. We will not be exhaustive in our study, but we will try to simplify the arguments with the most accurate and direct documentation we find in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy. We will not put all the arguments and quotations at each point, but we will add them as we develop the points under consideration.

What is the prelapsarian foundation of Christ's human nature?

**1. Only two men in human history had only God as their Father. They were the two Adams. Neither of these two people had a sinful spiritual nature, for the heavenly Father does not beget "the passion of the flesh" (1 John 2:16).**

"The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45). Both Adams had a spiritual nature free from all stains of sin. But the second Adam had a physical inheritance weakened by more than 4,000 years of sin.

**The first Adam** (we include his wife Eve because she came from Adam's rib).

"Adam, son of God" (Luke 3:38). God made his physical body from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7).

"He had originally the wonderful gift of a sinless nature" (*Letter* 83, 1905). "While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents" (*PP* 80). "Adam was assailed by the tempter... in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body" (*DA* 117).

**The second Adam (Jesus Christ)**

Like the first Adam, Jesus had a spiritual nature free from sin. But unlike Adam, Jesus received a physical inheritance weakened by four millennia of sin.

**a) Sinless spiritual nature**

"The Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). "What is conceived in her [Mary] is from the Holy Spirit" (Matt 1:20). He was conceived by His Father through the Holy Spirit. Consequently, His spiritual nature was sinless, unspotted, no tendency to evil. "His spiritual faculties were free from any taint of sin" (*ST* 12-09-97). "He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but *not the sinfulness of man*" (*ST* May 29, 1901).

**b) Fallen physical nature**

*The physical nature* of Christ received the impact of more than 4,000 years of sin. "A body you prepared for me," said the Lord; a fitted body "to do" the "will" of God (Heb 10:5). God prepared that body for Jesus from Mary. Thus, He took His physical nature from Adam, weakened for 4000 years. He was hungry, thirsty, needed rest, was sleepy and distressed. The prophet saw it when he said:

"His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness" (Isa 52:14). "He grew up... like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care" (Isa 53:2-3).

“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” (DA 48).

What were the effects of this weakened physical inheritance we see on His human ancestors? The antediluvians lived for about a thousand years. But life was shortening to almost a tenth of that existence already at the time of Moses, who reached only between 70 and 80 years old with great fatigue (Ps 90:10). So man's vitality and physical vigor decreased significantly over a shortened lifetime.

Christ's physical weakness could be especially felt in the wilderness of temptation after fasting for 40 days.

“His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him. For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, ‘His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men’ (Isa 52:14)” (DA 118). “What a contrast to this perfect being did the second Adam present, as he entered the desolate wilderness to cope with Satan, *single-handed*. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in size and physical strength, and deteriorating in moral worth” (2 SP 88).

“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” (DA 117).

Again, this is a reference to the decrease in physical and mental strength from Adam to the days of Jesus. By that time men no longer possessed the memory and original vigor that the first man had when he came from the hands of the Creator. The Son of God “took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity” (DA 117).

How did Jesus assume the weaknesses of mankind? This may be a reference to the physical heritage that He took from Mary, in contrast to the physical vigor of the first Adam. But it may also be a reference to His vicarious assumption of human degradation, for He was never sick (Matt 8:16-17). He possessed “the health of perfect manhood” (3 SM 133). We will see this point later as we consider other passages and statements of the Spirit of Prophecy.

## **2. Jesus was tempted as Adam before the fall, without natural propensity for evil**

Adam sinned without propensity or tendencies or inclinations to evil. Therefore, his sin was different from the sin of his offspring who already possessed an inclination to evil. Indeed, we did not introduce sin, nor did death come from us, but from him.

“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam... even over those not having sinned in the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the coming One” (Rom 5:14).

Why is Adam a type of the coming One? For he who was to come would not have an innate tendency to transgression like that which the descendants of the first Adam had.

“Men are contaminated with sin, and *they cannot have an adequate conception of the heinous character of the evil...*” (TMK 368). But Christ hated “sin *with a perfect hatred*” (TMK 66). “There

should not be the faintest misgiving in regard to the perfect freedom from sinfulness in the human nature of Christ” (17 MR 26).

### ***In Adam’s place before the fall***

“Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam’s position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain” (DA 117).

“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... Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God..., 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” (Lt 8 1897; 5 SDABC 1128-1129).

“The test to Christ was far greater than that of Adam and Eve, for Christ took our nature, fallen, but not corrupted, and would not be corrupted unless He received the words of Satan in the place of the words of God” (16 MR 182).

“Christ passed over the ground where Adam stumbled and fell... As man’s substitute and surety, Christ redeemed Adam’s disgraceful fall, and kept the way of the Lord” (RH, 05-23-99, 8). “Christ, the propitiation for our sins, declared: ‘I will stand in Adam’s place. I will take upon myself the penalty of his sin. He shall have another trial... He shall have the privileges and the opportunities of a free man, and be allowed to exercise his God-given power of choice’ (AU Gleaner, 08-19-03)

### **3. By nature we are evil, sinful and mortal. Therefore, the Son of God was required not to inherit Adam’s sinful nature in order to give us life**

We—sons of Adam after the fall—cannot be in the place of Adam before the fall to be tempted without a record of sin. Because we are coming already with a sinful inheritance. But Jesus, the Son of God, could be in the place of Adam because like Adam, He was in perfect freedom from sin, for He was begotten by God Himself. It follows that no son of Adam is entitled to eternal life. In the divine sentence, “in the day that you eat [from the forbidden tree], you will surely die” (Gen 2:17), we can read the loss of that right to life that the first Adam once had. And along with him, all his offspring lost that right, because their father could not procreate beings who had a perfect nature that he no longer possessed. So, if we inherit the condemnation that fell upon the first Adam, we also inherit his sin. The Psalmist said:

“I was brought forth in iniquity, and *in sin did my mother conceive me*” (Ps 51:5). “*The wicked go astray from the womb; liars err from birth*” (Ps 58:3).

The apostle Paul also depicted the reality that all were aware of:

“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). Therefore “in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22). “we all also once lived in the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed of the flesh and of its thoughts; and *we were by nature children of wrath* even as the rest” (Eph 2:3). “*Sons of disobedience*” (v. 2). “At its very source human nature was corrupted” (RH, 04-16-01).

Can it be said of Jesus that he was “by nature” a son of wrath, a son of disobedience? No! He was the Son of God. He did not inherit sin, guilt, nor Adam’s condemnation. He was a source of life, not a source of corruption.

*“The inheritance of children is that of sin. Sin has separated them from God. Jesus gave His life that He might unite the broken links to God. 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, enduring every test in man's behalf. He redeems Adam's disgraceful failure and fall by coming forth from the trial untarnished” (MR 236).*

Let's be realistic and consistent. If we receive the sentence of death from Adam, it is because we inherit his sin and guilt. Adam's children are “evil” by nature (Matt 7:11; Luke 11:13). This is why Paul said, “all dies in Adam,” so that all need Someone who did not receive that evil and doomed inheritance in order to give them life, and that Someone is Christ (1 Cor 15:22).

“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9). “every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood” (Gen 8:21). “Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (Gen 6:5). “By nature the heart is evil” (*DA* 172).

“After Adam and Eve had sinned, they were under bondage to the law” (*AU Gleaner*, 08-19-02, 1). “It was impossible for those who had once weakened themselves by transgression to fulfill the requirements of God; the consequence and penalty of sin was upon the race” (*ST*, 02-10-88, 7). “Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin,” Mar, 78. “At its very source human nature was corrupted” (*RH*, 04-16-01). “The sinful, erring nature of man” (*GC88*, 555). “*There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force, which unaided, he cannot resist*” (*Ed* 29)

“There is no one who does not sin” (1 Kgs 8:46). “No one living is righteous before you” (Ps 143:2). “There is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins” (Eccl 7:20). “All are under sin. There is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom 3:9-10). “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8,10). “From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness-- only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with olive oil” (Isa 1:6).

“Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!” (Job 14:4). “What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?” (Job 15:14). “Who can say, ‘I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?’” (Prov 20:9).

Can this dark inventory of the human nature of Adam's children, with their sinful tendencies inherited and cultivated, be the same inventory as the human nature of the Redeemer of the world? Bad, powerless, polluted and filthy, wandering, sinful, deserving by nature of the penalty of sin, etc. Of course not! “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor 15:50). Humanity cannot rise above itself because of the sin of its earthly parent, it was “made” or “constituted” sinful (Rom 5:19). “All are under sin” (Rom 3:9).

But although “we were dead in transgressions” (spiritually dead for being carnal from birth), Christ came to give us life (Eph 2:5). A dead man doesn't bring another dead man to life. “The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45).

**4. In order for the Son of God to be a perfect offering and bear the sin of the people, He could not inherit the fallen spiritual nature of Adam. It had to be clean, without stain or contamination.**

Christianity has long been discussing if we are born in sin, or if we simply have tendencies to sin. The fact that in the history of this earth there was only one man who never sinned, (for which redemption came only from Him), leads us to believe with E. G. White that “the inheritance of children is that of sin” (*ChG* 475). The apostle Paul wrote that “our sinful passions were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” (Rom 7:5), because they are “at war with the law of” our “mind and making” us “captive to the law of sin which dwells in” our “members” (v. 23). We are “sold into slavery under sin” (v. 14; see Gal 5:17).

### ***In order to be saved, babies need also a Savior***

Because the Catholic Church thought to solve the problem with the doctrine of original sin and the consequent baptism of children to take away that sin from them, many SDAs ended up believing that we do not receive Adam's sin, but only his inheritance that tends to evil. This could lead us to believe that if a child dies at birth, he could not have had a conscious sin and, despite his sinful inheritance, would deserve eternal life. But we encounter serious problems if we are left with the idea of receiving only Adam's sinful inheritance, but not the loss of eternal life in the event of not sinning. For example, what was David's son's fault for Uriah the Hittite's wife for God to kill him? (2 Sam 11 and 12). No one. Actually, that child died because of David's sin.

What happened to the children of the entire antediluvian generation who died in the waters of the flood that God sent to the world in those days? What happened to the children of the enemies of Israel, who God commanded that they scrape from the earth, with all their offspring?

“In the cities of the nations that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not leave alive anything that breathes. You must devote them to complete destruction... as the Lord your God has commanded you” (Deut 20:16-17).

Mothers used to offer their infants to Moloch, slitting their throats, and God commanded those nations to be completely destroyed.

“Attack the Amalekites and devote to destruction all that belongs to them. Do not spare them, but *put to death* men and women, *children and infants*” (1 Sam 15:3).

These children did not commit any sin either, and yet they deserved death. Why? Because they belonged to their parents, and everything “that belongs” to their parents had to die. In other words, children inherit the sin, guilt, and death sentence of their parents. By inheriting Adam's death sentence, as we saw above, everyone, including the little ones, receive the guilt of Adam. So, there is not a limbo where the Lord will send them (a Catholic invention), neither a “hellfire” where they will be suffering eternally (another Catholic invention that comes from Greek pagan philosophy). Those children will not have either a measurable debt to pay in the final punishment.

According to the passages we saw in the Bible, where God also destroyed the little ones of the wicked, we can see that these little children will not be resurrected. But they will also not receive the degree of guilt and punishment from their parents because they did not commit a particular sin in the first time of their life. It will be with them as it will with the slaves who, because of the mistreatment given by their masters, became like animals. According to the *Spirit of Prophecy*, they will not be resurrected to continue suffering, because they became unable by force, to make their own decisions. Let us read from the book *Early Writings*, 276:

“I saw that the slave master will have to answer for the soul of his slave whom he has kept in ignorance; and the sins of the slave will be visited upon the master. God cannot take to heaven the slave who has been kept in ignorance and degradation, knowing nothing of God or the Bible, fearing nothing but his master's lash, and holding a lower position than the brutes. But He does the best thing for him that a compassionate God can do. He permits him to be as if he had not been (*EW* 276)

The judgments of God that fell upon the ancient world and will be consummated throughout the world in the end show us that after Adam's fall, the death penalty weighs upon all mankind. Therefore, in order to be saved, the adults as well as the little ones need a Savior. What will happen to the babies of faithful parents? (Who knows if not also to some fetuses who were not born alive?). They will be given to their mothers at the resurrection because they belonged to them, flesh of their flesh and bone of their bones. They were part of the fathers, and of the inheritance of life that these fathers received from the second Adam.

This is confirmed in a vision referred to by the Spirit of Prophecy. E. G. White saw in the day of resurrection “little children” being “borne by holy angels to their mothers’ arms” (CG 566). In another vision she saw that some little ones flew but found no one to guide them, until the angels brought them with them to heaven. I guess that this will happen with children who died when their parents were faithful, but apostatized later. Those little children will definitely find other arms up in heaven that will pamper them, as their parents will be lost forever.

Let us keep in mind that the children among God’s people are also the inheritance of the Lord. “Children are a heritage of the Lord” (Ps 127:3). These children belong not only to their faithful earthly parents, but also to the Lord. God Himself promised the faithful parents of His people: “I will save your children” (Isa 49:25). In agreement with this principle, Jesus said that “the kingdom of heaven” belong to them (Matt 19:14).

And in reality, all of God’s people were redeemed already in ancient times to be the inheritance of the Eternal (Deut 7:6; 26:18-19; 32:9; 1 Kgs 8:51; Ps 74:2; 135:4; 1 Pe 2:9, etc). For through the gospel that was given to the ancients through shadows and prefigurations (Heb 4:2), God adopted His people as a son by grace, by virtue of the future redemption of the Son of God (Exod 4:22-23). In this context, we can understand the apostle John’s admiration when he said: “Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1).

### ***Was Jesus born in sin?***

By grasping this reality that we are born in sin, some postlapsarian Adventists have presumed that Christ was made sin at birth. For example, Jack Sequeira, *Saviour of the World. The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel* (PPPA, Boise, Idaho, 1996), 167,169,174,198,200,209. And even if others are not so bold to say it, that is what they imply when they say that Jesus came with a sinful spiritual nature. But let us ask ourselves. Was Christ really born in sin? No, because in that case it couldn’t have been a perfect offering.

Catholics also thought about solving that reality by saying that God made Mary sinless and immaculate so that she could be a “Co-Redemptrix.” But this is an invention that has no biblical support, and leaves open the question of how she could be born immaculate while coming from parents who were not sinless. Because unlike Jesus, her two parents were earthly.

When were the clean animals offered in sacrifice made to be sin? Did they become sin when they were born or when the sin of the sinners was confessed with their hand on the animal’s head? (Lev 4:4,15; 5:5, etc.). When the animals were brought to be slaughtered, they were to be one year old, to be clean, “without defect” (Exod 12:5; Lev 1:3,10; 23:12; Num 7:57). This was also required of the Son of God for his sacrifice to be accepted by God, who exercised his ministry in full strength of life, when He was thirty years old (Luke 3:23).

“He offered Himself unblemished [or without spot] to God” (Heb 9:14), “with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pe 1:19).

### ***“He was made sin” in Gethsemane***

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21).

At what point did that happen? According to the Spirit of Prophecy, God made His son vicariously “sin” in Gethsemane, because it was there that the Son began to feel how much God abhors sin and realize that the divine wrath should now fall upon Him for assuming our fault (although He had been carrying the sin of the people throughout His ministry: Mat 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4)

“Throughout His life on earth He had walked in the light of God’s presence... (John 8:29). But now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God’s sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all” (DA 604). “He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man he must endure the wrath of God against transgression” (DA 605).

“Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before... As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering divine justice” (DA 605). “The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God’s wrath against sin was crushing out His life” (DA 606).

It is clear—as documented above—that there is more than a tendency or propensity for evil at birth. We have a deadly sinful heritage that gives no one the right to eternal life, not even newborn babies. Even Rebekah’s two sons fought each other in the very womb of their mother (Gen 25:22-23). And once again, it was necessary for the Redeemer not to receive that sinful inheritance from Adam after the fall, so consistently the gospels tell us that the one who begat Him was not an earthly father, but God Himself in the person of the Holy Ghost. A perfect offering.

“Christ did not possess the same sinful, corrupt, fallen disloyalty we possess, for then He could not be a perfect offering” (3 SM 131).

“Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be... 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’” (5 SDABC, 1128)

##### **5. If it hadn’t been a perfect offering, it wouldn’t have been our substitute either.**

In order to be the substitute for a fallen race, the Son of God must bear its guilt without possessing in His humanity the stigma of sin that mankind entails. For this reason, no son of Adam could die as an acceptable substitute of ours, for as already seen, no human being was or ever could be righteous by himself (1 Kgs 8:46; Eccl 7:20; 1 John 1:8; Rom 3:9-10). This was simply “impossible” because of the weakness of our sinful nature that we inherited from our first parents (Rom 8:3,7; see Ps 51:5; 58:3).

“After the fall God saw that man had no power within himself to keep from sin, and provision was made whereby he could have help” (ST, 02,17,09, 9). “The sinful nature of man was weak, and he was prone to the transgression of God’s commandments. Man had not the power to do the words of God; that is why Christ came to our world, that He might give him moral power. There was no power in heaven or in earth but the power of Christ that could deliver...” (14 MR 1094, 82).

“The Son of God came to the earth because he saw that moral power in man is weak” (YL, 12-28-99, 2). “Because man fallen could not overcome Satan with his human strength, Christ came from the royal courts of heaven to help him with His human and divine strength combined” (1 SM 279).

##### ***Biblical substitution***

How does biblical substitution work in our human situation? That someone clean, innocent, unspotted, could carry the dirt and guilt of the transgressor, and die for him.

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). “‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so



that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’” (1 Pe 2:24).

Some postlapsarians take certain statements of the Spirit of Prophecy that refer to the fact that Jesus carried upon Himself our human weaknesses, and think that these statements have to do with the fallen inheritance of humanity that Jesus received morally and spiritually when He was born. But while it is true that Jesus received our fallen physical nature (without the physical and mental potentiality of Adam’s nature), His spiritual nature was begotten clean and remained so until He carried our sin on the cross. He did not come with sinful moral propensity, nor was He morally tempted as we will see later. On the contrary, as we have just seen, He came to impart to man a “moral power” that man no longer had. “The Son of God came to the earth because He saw that moral power in man is weak” (*YI*, 12-28-99, 2).

### ***Jesus did not get sick to bring our illnesses and weaknesses that are typical of a fallen nature***

What did Jesus come here for? To become familiar with the common weaknesses of the human race, and to be able to feel sorry for the struggles that fallen human beings have. To do this, He did not need to participate in the degradations of humanity, nor cease being healthy and holy. Because He was never sick. No one could tell Him by healing the sick, “physician, heal thyself” (Luke 4:23). No priest could witness that he saw Jesus bringing a clean animal to offer it for a personal sin, for He Himself was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). So He was also able to tell those who questioned His mission: “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” (John 8:46)

“When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Matt 8:16-17).

Here we see that Jesus carried the infirmities or weaknesses and diseases of our human race in a vicarious way, not as a fleshly inheritance received from Mary. He freed the demon possessed without becoming possessed either by the demons or becoming sick. So the tradeoff had to do with a spiritual burden in Jesus’ heart, in His empathy and the feelings of suffering as He experienced the world’s misfortunes. The same goes for our sin that He carried on His back—as already seen—without having participated in the flattery of the flesh that weighs on human beings.

“Christ alone was able to bear the afflictions of all the human family. ‘In all their afflictions He was afflicted.’ He never bore disease in His own flesh, but He carried the sickness of others. When suffering humanity pressed about Him He who was in the health of perfect manhood was as one afflicted with them” (3 *SM* 133).

### ***Vicar assumption of the weaknesses and degenerations of our race***

The following statements show us Christ’s vicarious assumption of the weaknesses and degenerations of our race. They also prove that Jesus’ perfection in this specific context had to do with His training to be the Savior of the world. That training could not be acquired by Adam before the fall, for it can only be learned through suffering in the midst of a sinful world, and in subjection to such a painful daily experience.

This is how Christ can be a perfect Savior. This is how He can understand us in our trials, not because sin attracted Him in any of its forms, but because He carried all that in a vicarious way during His ministry and especially by dying on the cross. That knowledge of our struggles and sorrows allows Him to justify us as an infallible lawyer in the presence of God.

We have someone in the highest court of the universe who understands our condition. He can feel sorry for our weaknesses, because He knows them. It is this knowledge that enables Him to be our lawyer and a high priest before the angels of God (Heb 8:1-2; 1 John 2:1). The prophet had already said it:

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain ..., though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and ... make his life an offering for sin.” “By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:9-11).

“Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed ... He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished” (Isa 53:3-6,8).

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb 5:7-9). “In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered” (Heb 2:10).

“He took upon him humanity that he might know the infirmities and temptations of humanity, that he might know how to help and save men. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. Was he not perfect before?—Yes. But *he was made a perfect Savior, learning obedience by the things which he suffered*” (ST, 5-20-89, 8)

**6. No one ever suffered like Christ just because they had a clean, healthy nature in a world of sin. He has trodden the winepress alone.**

I have met pastors who had to abandon their ministry because they could not cope with the problems of others. They got sick as they tried to address humanity’s misery. There are also people who can’t stand the physical pain of others. Such people could not be nurses or doctors. It was also a burden for Jesus to endure the pain and misery of humanity without losing his breath. It is precisely because He had no propensities to sin that His burdens and temptations were greater than ours, because He had to be subject to an earthly life and its authorities, with a greater sensitivity than ours for justice and truth.

“Men are contaminated with sin, and *they cannot have an adequate conception of the heinous character of the evil...*” (TMK 368). But Christ hated “sin with a perfect hatred” (TMK 66).

“The human nature of Christ is likened to ours, and suffering was more keenly felt by Him; for His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin” (ST, 12-09-97). “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18).

“The Saviour was always guarded by heavenly angels, yet *His life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. Not one of us will ever have to meet such fierce temptations as He did*” (SJ 38,39).

Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled” when He was brought to the tomb of Lazarus, and wept before the multitude (John 11:33,35,38). He felt sorry for the widow of Nain (Luke 7:13). He wept for Jerusalem, foretelling the sad fate of the city upon which His divine glory had rested for so long (Luke 19:41). He also had compassion seeing the crowds, “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt 9:36), and His compassion moved Him to heal their sick (Mark 14:14). He also had compassion when the crowd remained with Him without eating on the mountain for three days, and took care of their need (Mark 8:2-3). He was “deeply distressed and troubled” when He came to Gethsemane, with His soul “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”, knowing that He now had to bear the sins of humanity upon the cross (Mark 14:33-34).

In the following statements we can again see that *Jesus carried the weaknesses and degenerations of the human race in a vicarious way*, as our substitute, without possessing our carnal passions, without having an appetite for sin. Christ was not subject to the bondage of sin, but came and remained completely free from sin as Adam before the fall.

“He took human nature, and *bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race*. He, who knew no sin, *became sin for us*” (1 SM 268). “He was to take His position at the head of humanity *by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man*” (7 SDABC 925). “There should not be the faintest misgivings in regard to *the perfect freedom from sinfulness in the human nature of Christ*” (16MR, 201, 117).

“He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness” (Heb 5:2). “In taking human nature, Christ was fitted to understand man's trials and sorrows and all the temptations wherewith he is beset” (1 SM 252).

“He is *a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions*. As the sinless One, *His nature recoiled from evil. He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin*. His humanity made prayer a necessity and privilege. He required all the stronger divine support and comfort which His Father was ready to impart to Him, to Him who had, for the benefit of man, left the joys of heaven and chosen His home in a cold and thankless world” (Pr 173; 7 SDABC 455).

“*The path from the manger to Calvary was shadowed by sorrow and grief. He was the Man of Sorrows, and endured such heartache as no human language can portray*. He could have said in truth, ‘Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow’ (Lam 1:12). His suffering was the deepest anguish of the soul; and what man could have sympathy with the soul anguish of the Son of the infinite God? *Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world, as He trod the path to Calvary, suffering the penalty of the transgressor...*” (TMK 66).

### ***The childhood of Christ was different from the other children***

“*Jesus was not in all things like other children...* (SJ 29). *Often He was reproved for not obeying what others did. Then He showed from the Bible what was the right way...* All this displeased His brothers. They threatened and tried to terrify Him, but He kept right on, doing as God had said. Because He was so kind and gentle, the rabbis hoped to make Him do as they did. But they could not. When urged to obey their rules He asked what the Bible taught. Whatever that said, He would do” (SJ 37).

“This made the rabbis angry. They knew that their rules were contrary to the Bible, and yet they were displeased with Jesus for refusing to obey them. They complained of Him to His parents. Joseph and Mary thought the rabbis good men, and Jesus suffered blame, which was hard to bear. The brothers of Jesus took sides with the rabbis. The words of these teachers, they said, should be heeded as the word of God. They reproved Jesus for setting Himself above the leaders of the people... They threatened and tried to terrify Him, but He kept right on, doing as God had said” (SJ 37,38).

“Many were the trials and temptations that Jesus had to meet. Satan was always watching to overcome Him... The Saviour was always guarded by heavenly angels, yet *His life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. Not one of us will ever have to meet such fierce temptations as He did*. But to every temptation He had one answer: ‘It is written.’ The wrongdoing of His brothers He did not often rebuke, but He told them what God had said” (SJ 38,39).

“Nazareth was a wicked town, and the children and youth tried to have Jesus follow their evil ways. He was bright and cheerful, and they liked His company. But His godly principles roused their anger. Often for refusing to join in some forbidden act, He was called a coward. Often He was sneered at, as being altogether too particular about little things. To all this His answer was: ‘It is written.’ ‘The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding’ (Job 28:28). To love evil is to love death, for ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Rom 6:23) (SJ 39).

“Jesus did not contend for His rights. When roughly used, He bore it patiently. Because He was so willing and uncomplaining, *His work was often made needlessly hard*. Yet He was not discouraged for He knew that God smiled upon Him” (SJ 39).

### ***He trod the winepress alone***

He trod the winepress alone, and no one understood Him until He left. Only then did his disciples realize who had been with them. The inspired descriptions shared above and those which we will share now can help us understand the differing nature of Christ’s temptations, and how He had to endure the sinfulness of the corrupted human nature of others. That’s what touches us and moves us to want to imitate Him and be like Him.

While his mother taught him the Bible, his heavenly Father instructed him regularly.

“Through childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus walked alone. In His purity and His faithfulness, He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He carried the awful weight of responsibility for the salvation of men... *This was the burden of His soul, and none could appreciate the weight that rested upon Him*” (AG 163).

“Throughout His life His mother and His brothers did not comprehend His mission. Even His disciples did not understand Him. He had dwelt in eternal light, as one with God, but *His life on earth must be spent in solitude*. As one with us, He must bear the burden of our guilt and woe. *The Sinless One must feel the shame of sin. The peace lover must dwell with strife, the truth must abide with falsehood, purity with vileness*. Every sin, every discord, every defiling lust that transgression had brought, was *torture to His spirit...*” (AG 163).

“*Alone He must tread the path; alone He must bear the burden*. Upon Him who had laid off His glory and accepted the weakness of humanity the redemption of the world must rest. He saw and felt it all, but His purpose remained steadfast. Upon His arm depended the salvation of the fallen race, and He reached out His hand to grasp the hand of Omnipotent love...” (AG 163).

“*The loneliness of Christ*, separated from the heavenly courts, living the life of humanity, was never understood or appreciated by the disciples as it should have been... When Jesus was no longer with them, ... they began to see how they might have shown Him attentions that would have brought gladness to His heart ...” (AG 163).

“*Christ submitted to insult and mockery, contempt and ridicule. He heard His message, which was fraught with love and goodness and mercy, misstated and misapplied. He heard Himself called the prince of demons, because He testified to His divine Sonship*. His birth was supernatural, but by His own nation, those who had blinded their eyes to spiritual things, it was regarded as a blot and a stain. There was not a drop of our bitter woe which He did not taste, not a part of our curse which He did not endure, that He might bring many sons and daughters to God” (1 SM 253).

### **7. Christ was tempted in all “like” us, not equal in the form**

One of the greatest problems of postlapsarians is the inconsistent way of interpreting the passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews that compare Jesus’ temptations to our own temptations. They believe that Jesus had to face all the temptations we have in the same circumstances and ways in which they arise. The Apostle Paul expressed himself as follows:

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but One Who was tempted in all things according to *the likeness (homoióteta)* of our own temptations; yet He was without sin” (Heb 4:15: *A Faithful Version*). “it was necessary that in all respects He should be made to resemble (*homiozenai*) His brothers, so that He might become a compassionate and faithful High Priest in things relating to God, in order to atone for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17: *Weymouth New Testament*).

“He was tempted *in all things according to the likeness* of our own temptations.” What does it mean? “That he was tempted to smoke a cigarette or marijuana? That he had to struggle against drug addiction in order to understand the people who are striving to get off the drug and feel sorry for them? If many of us have never had of the temptations that others have, why should Jesus go through the temptations of the whole world to give everyone an example of how to resist temptation?”

No, no, no! Jesus should not become the most depraved human being in order to arise from that condition and be able to understand the greatest sinner. Homosexuality as well as other equivalent human practices, are aberrations that go “against nature” (Rom 1:26-27,31). Other vices such as cigarettes and drugs are destructive, and enslave their victims, leading them to disease and death. And if many of us do not have and never have had such propensities, it is obvious that not all human beings are tempted in the same way.

This leads us to wonder how Jesus could be “tempted in all things according to the likeness of our temptations,” without having the tendencies or attractions for sin that every son of Adam has. Indeed:

“We must not think that the liability of Christ to yield to Satan’s temptations *degraded His humanity and He possessed the same sinful, corrupt propensities as man*” (16 MR 1211, 182)

### ***What temptation is all about***

It is here where we must ask ourselves about the essence of temptation. As you study the Bible and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, you can see that temptation is essentially to stop doing God’s will in the face of conflict or provocation, whatever its form. In this context, we have already seen that Jesus was tempted much more strongly than we were, for no other being on earth was harassed by as much darkness as He was. As we will see later, the temptations of the devil tried to separate Him from His Father and push Him to abandon His redeeming mission that His Father had laid upon Him when He came to earth.

So when the Apostle Paul said that Jesus was “tempted in all according to our likeness,” he was not referring to being tempted in everything like us in form, but in the common points we have concerning the essence of temptation. And here we have to consider the importance of the term “likeness” (*homoioteta*), which is not the same as equal (*isos*).

### ***Jesus’ temptations and human nature were similar, not equal to our own***

Jesus was not tempted in everything like us in form, but “according to our likeness” (*homoioteta*). He did not have a sinful spiritual nature like ours, but came “in the likeness (*homoiomati*) of sinful flesh,” or “in the form of sinful nature” (Rom 8:3).

Heb 7:15 says that Jesus was similar (*homoioteta*) to Melchizedek, not equal, because unlike Melchizedek, the priesthood of the Son of God was established forever (Heb 7:3). This shows us that between Melchizedek and Christ there are things in common, but at the same time very significant differences.

In Rev 4:7 we read that the four cherubs who praise God before His throne were “similar” (*homoion*), not “equal” to a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle. In Rev 1:13 and 14:14, John sees Jesus “like a Son of Man” because he sees Him glorified, not as he had seen Him on earth when Jesus came by the first time.

In Rom 6:5 the apostle compares the death and resurrection symbolized in baptism, with the actual death and resurrection of Christ. He says that we die and are resurrected *in the likeness* of Him (*homoioteta*), not equal to Him. Between symbol or form and reality, there are significant differences. In Philippians 2:6-7 we read that being equal (*isa*) to God, He took the human form in “the likeness (*homoioteta*) of men.”

All this shows us that there is common ground between Christ and us, but there are very substantial differences in human nature as in the kind of temptations the Son of God had. Jesus’ temptations were essentially equivalent in all things to our temptations. In His human nature the same thing happened. People didn’t notice the difference because they saw Him with a fallen physical nature like ours. But as for His spiritual nature, they had to be enlightened by God in order to see it (Matt 16:15-17).

E. G. White also understood that Jesus assumed *the likeness of sinful flesh*. This means that He carried

our sinful nature in some aspects such as physically, but not spiritually and morally. The fact that humanity had been weakened in the past in terms of “moral worth” does not mean that He was tempted to immorality. Although the power or human capacity to do good had weakened in the face of increased wickedness, the Son of God remained faithful and fulfilled his Father’s will in the midst of the storm.

“Jesus had taken upon Himself human nature, and was *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and was tempted of Satan as all children are tempted” (SD 128). God sent “His Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh* (2 SP 29). “He clothed His divinity with humanity, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made *in the likeness of sinful flesh*” (BEcho, Dec 15, 1892).

It is in this sense that we must understand some statements of the Spirit of Prophecy which speak of Christ assuming our sinful nature. As we saw above, He did so in physical form, or in a vicarious or substitute form by carrying upon Himself our fallen nature and nailing it to the cross.

### ***Jesus could not be tempted even in thought***

Satan tried to confuse the mind of Christ as he had done the minds of Adam and Eve. But he could not induce Christ to sin even in thought. Speaking of the sinner, E. G. White warned that “*his strongest temptations will come from within; for he must battle against the inclinations of the natural heart...*, finite and incapable of any good in and of himself” (BEcho, Dec 1, 1892). But she said of Jesus that no “inclination to corruption rested upon Christ” (5 SDABC 1128).

It cannot be said of Christ what is said of us, that “by nature the heart is evil” (DA 172; GC 505; see Jer 17:9). The natural heart of Christ was that of God in human flesh. It was not a bad heart and corrupted like ours by nature. He did not need for that which is earthly to die within him, for He had nothing worldly in his heart.

Of us is said what cannot be said of Christ.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts--murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matt 15:19). “I find then the principle that *evil is present in me*, the one who wishes to do good” (Rom 7:21). “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5). “For everything in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:16). “Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (Jas 1:14-15).

So we see that, unlike us, the devil could find nothing within Christ that he could exploit to bring Him down. He was purity, immaculate and infinite.

“‘The prince of this world cometh,’ said Jesus, ‘and hath nothing in Me’ (John 14:30). *There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan’s sophistry*. He did not consent to sin. *Not even by a thought* did He yield to temptation” (DA 123). “*Not even by a thought* could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. *Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold...* But Christ declared of Himself: ‘The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me’ (John 14:30). *Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory*. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage” (GC 623).

### **8. Jesus’ temptations had to do with the fulfillment of His mission, not with immorality.**

In the Gospels we find no mention of Jesus being tempted to immorality. The devil is very cunning, and

he knew he wasn't going to get anything there. Jesus warned that "anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:28). And He kept the commandments of God, including that which forbids coveting the neighbor's wife (Exod 20:17). So no woman, not even Mary the whore, would feel the need to be protected from a sensual look from the Son of God. He could look at men and women in perfect freedom of sin. Moral and spiritual sin never attracted Him at all.

The temptations of Jesus were mostly about His identity and mission on earth, in an attempt to prevent Him from being the Redeemer of the world. He received constant provocations that sought to discredit Him, denigrate Him before others, and discourage Him from fulfilling His mission. Of His birth to a virgin, they hinted in public that He was the son of fornication (John 8:41). They declared that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, prince of demons (Matt 12:24). They wanted to scare Him into running away because Herod was looking for Him to kill Him (Luke 13:31).

"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... No human being had come into the world and escaped the power of the deceiver. The forces of the confederacy of evil were set upon His track to engage in warfare against Him, and if possible to prevail over Him" (DA 116).

### ***He had stronger temptations than ours***

Some argue that Jesus had advantages in His temptations because of his purity, nobility and lack of any bent to evil. But these also came with disadvantages. He could not sin a single time without ruining the plan of salvation. We have the privilege of recovering from our falls. "Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again" (Prov 24:16). But there was much more at stake in Christ because the salvation of the world depended on His success. And because He had to resist evil while at the same time carrying our sins.

"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. 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*" (DA 116). "He humbled Himself, and took upon Him our nature, that He might make us like Himself, pure and upright, free from defilement. *He suffered more than any of you will ever be called to suffer*" (ST July 9, 1902).

### ***The temptations of the wilderness***

All temptations in the wilderness, as Jesus began His earthly ministry, had to do with His mission as Savior of the world. In His first temptation, the devil began trying to confuse Jesus about His true identity as the Son of God, requiring Him to prove it by transforming stones into bread in order to meet His needs. If the devil came to any of us with that temptation, we would laugh at him, because we don't have that power. But Christ would not use His divine power on His own behalf that we could not use on our behalf. If He did it, His mission would have been ruined, and our redemption lost forever. The devil "tempted Jesus to condescend to give him proof of His being the Messiah, by exercising His divine power" (EW 155).

"Ever since Adam's sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had come 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom 8:3), the Father Himself spoke" (DA 116).

When the devil appeared in the wilderness, "the glory departed, and He was left to battle with temptation. It was pressing upon Him every moment. *His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him.* For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and *haggard with mental agony,* 'His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than

the sons of men' (Isa 52:14). Now was Satan's opportunity. Now he supposed that he could overcome Christ" (DA 118).

"He hoped that under the force of despondency and extreme hunger, Christ would lose faith in His Father, and work *a miracle in His own behalf. Had He done this, the plan of salvation would have been broken*" (DA 119). "*Christ was not to exercise divine power for His own benefit. He had come to bear trial as we must do, leaving us an example of faith and submission. Neither here nor at any subsequent time in His earthly life did He work a miracle in His own behalf. His wonderful works were all for the good of others*" (DA 119).

Then the devil tried to deceive Him with a second well-calculated temptation to push Christ to proceed recklessly, making Him believe that He could do so by relying on the divine protection promised in His Word. In this way, he sought to tempt God Himself to intervene to save His Son by a crazy act of Jesus. But Christ deflected that temptation by letting the Bible interpret itself: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." No one is allowed to act presumptuously with the intention of forcing God to save him.

And then came the third temptation. Always linked to the mission of the Son of God. In that temptation the devil played all of his aces. He showed Christ all the kingdoms that He had come to conquer and intended to possess as "prince of this world" with all their pomp and splendor. He offered to give Christ the victory, but without taking into account the plan of God. Jesus would need to worship Satan. A new "it is written" settled the conflict, and Christ emerged victorious by expelling Satan. He did not depart from the mission His Father had laid out for him.

### ***Subsequent temptations to escape its redemptive mission***

Another unexpected temptation came to Jesus from one of His closest disciples. It happened when Jesus began to tell His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer by the nation's leaders, die, and rise again on the third day. Peter then approached Jesus to encourage Him and told Him not to say that, because the Messiah, in Peter's understanding, should reign. In that little friendly encouragement Jesus saw the devil hidden, trying to take Him away from the most dramatic and capital moment of His mission. But instead of rebuking Peter, He rebuked the devil for putting earthly things before God's will, saying: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns" (Matt 16:23).

Another very subtle temptation came from Greeks who came to the feast requesting to see Jesus, on the eve of His crucifixion in Jerusalem. But Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to die. And this was a magnificent opportunity for Jesus to excuse Himself from dying for His people, going to preach to other parts of the world. However, Jesus knew that the time was coming when the good news of salvation would be given in the Greek world through the apostles. So He replied:

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:20-26).

This temptation moved Jesus deeply, because He said: "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour" (John 12:27).

### ***In Gethsemane***

"The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that *He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father's love*" (DA 685). "He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit



shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression... He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness” (DA 686).

“He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. In the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ’s ministry. Everything was at stake with him. If he failed here, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of the world would finally become Christ’s; he himself would be overthrown and cast out. But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan’s kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power” (DA 686-7).

“With the issues of the conflict before Him, *Christ’s soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal.* He would be identified with Satan’s kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God. And what was to be gained by this sacrifice? How hopeless appeared the guilt and ingratitude of men! In its hardest features Satan pressed the situation upon the Redeemer: The people who claim to be above all others in temporal and spiritual advantages have rejected You. They are seeking to destroy You, the foundation, the center and seal of the promises made to them as a peculiar people. One of Your own disciples, who has listened to Your instruction, and has been among the foremost in church activities, will betray You. One of Your most zealous followers will deny You. All will forsake You” (DA 687).

“The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. *He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul.* The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, ‘O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done’ (DA 690).

### ***On the cross***

The strongest provocations were displayed in the final scenes that culminated in his crucifixion. The only calm face, bloodied by the crown of thorns, was that of the Son of God, while the mob screamed with frenzy:

“Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15). “They spit in His face and struck Him. Others slapped Him and said, “Prophesy to us, Christ! Who hit You?” (Matt 26:67-68). “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” (Luke 23:18).

“He saved others, ... but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God deliver Him now if He wants Him. For He said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matt 27:42-43). “If You are the King of the Jews,” they said, “save Yourself! ... Are You not the Christ? ... Save Yourself and us!” (Luke 23:37-38).

But Jesus had already surrendered in Gethsemane. There He had already virtually died. Anticipating that event, the Psalmist had prophesied:

“But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they sneer and shake their heads: ‘He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord deliver him; let the Lord rescue him, since He delights in him’” (Ps 22:6-8).

“I am a worm.” Unlike an irritable cobra that sticks out its tongue and bites when it is provoked, a worm does not react. So it was with Jesus. The devil couldn’t find anything carnal about Him that got Him out of control.

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth” (Isa 53:7).

Who can remain indifferent to such a spectacle? Who can avoid being touched by such great love, and not choose to love and recognize Him as the King of His life? Who’s not going to want to imitate His life and follow Him wherever He was? Of these it is said in relation to the final crisis in which the scenes of the praetorium will be repeated:

“They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless” (Rev 14:4-5).

### **Postlapsarian Postulates**

As we considered the prelapsarian approach to the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ, we were able to further appreciate the wonderful and perfect character of the Son of God. But there are still some questions posed by postlapsarians that we will seek to answer now. We have already stated the postlapsarian position on those questions in when we developed the postlapsarian interpretation. Now we will look a little more precisely at these issues. What specifically are the postulates and criticisms of the prelapsarian interpretation?

**1. They consider that the official interpretation of the Adventist Church was originally the postlapsarian view, and that the “new theology” (as M. L. Andreasen called it in the middle of the last century) was in fact a move toward apostasy.**

**Answer:** There is no official document of the Adventist Church, endorsed by a general conference, to corroborate postlapsarian interpretation. The document on the *28 Fundamental Doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* that was voted on in Dallas, Texas, in 1980, adopted the prelapsarian interpretation of the spiritual nature of Christ, and the postlapsarian nature with regard to His physical nature. I recommend you to read the good summary found in chapter 4 of that book, entitled “God the Son.” It is consistent with what we have developed most widely in this document.

M. L. Andreasen and the radical postlapsarians who followed him, called the prelapsarian interpretation of the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ that it is believed in the Adventist Church today “new theology”. Why does the Adventist Church support the prelapsarian interpretation in the spiritual nature of Christ? Because it is supported by the Bible and spirit of prophecy. But it happens like I have seen on other topics. There is a statement by E. G. White in the book *Desires of Ages* which is interpreted as being postlapsarian by some, and set aside a more encompassing light that came later, which brings balance and offers a higher precision. That most abundant light came in the last three decades of E. G. White’s life, and without denying what she wrote in the aforementioned book. But the compilation of such testimonies of the Spirit of Prophecy did not appear before the 1980s.

**2. They think that a non-fallen nature view of Christ detract from His merits.**

**Answer:** We have already seen that the strongest temptations in a world accustomed to evil falls upon the most holy person because his sensitivity toward sin is greater. And in the case of the Son of God, He had temptations that we will never have because He had all divine power within His reach, and yet He had to restrain his hand in order to remain subject to our human condition in our depraved world. Let us gather

here some of the many statements of the Spirit of Prophecy that show that Jesus had no advantage over us, not because He suffered the same temptations that we have in the same form, but in the essential nature of all temptation.

“It was a *difficult task* for the Prince of Life to carry out the plan which he had undertaken for the salvation of man, in clothing his divinity with humanity. He had received honor in the heavenly courts, and was familiar with absolute power. *It was as difficult for him to keep the level of humanity as it is for men to rise above the low level of their depraved natures*, and be partakers of the divine nature” (RH, 1 de abril, 1875, 3). “He humbled Himself, and took upon Him our nature, that He might make us like Himself, pure and upright, free from defilement. *He suffered more than any of you will ever be called to suffer*” (ST July 9, 1902).

“*Christ bore temptations such as you will never be called upon to bear. He suffered as you will never suffer.* He knew all your griefs, he has carried your sorrows. He has made it possible for you to be an overcomer” (ST June 17, 1889). “The human nature of Christ is likened to ours, and *suffering was more keenly felt by Him; for His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin*” (ST, 12-09-97).

“The Saviour was always guarded by heavenly angels, yet *His life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. Not one of us will ever have to meet such fierce temptations as He did*” (SJ 38,39). “The enticements which Christ resisted ... *were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours*” (DA 116).

**3. They believe that if Christ did not have the same sinful tendencies that we have, then He would not have been tempted in everything as we are, nor could He understand us in our struggle against sin.**

**Answer.** They do not realize that the devil adapts his temptations to the conditions and circumstances of each one, and that Christ can understand us because He was tempted in all that the devil thought could bring Him down, as the devil does with us in our particular weaknesses. As we have already responded to this postlapsarian postulate, we will be satisfied here to cite the SDA Fundamental Beliefs #4 on this subject:

“Obviously ‘in all points’ or ‘in every way’ (NIV) does not mean that He met the identical temptations we meet today. He was never tempted to watch demoralizing TV programs, or to break the speed limit in an automobile. *The basic issue underlying all temptations is the question of whether to surrender the will to God.* In His encounter with temptation Jesus always maintained His allegiance to God. Through continual dependence on divine power He successfully resisted the fiercest temptations even though He was human.”

**4. They presume that if the Son of God came with Adam’s sinless nature before the fall, He could not be our example because we inherited Adam’s sinful nature after the fall.**

We may quote Jack Sequeira: “If Christ assumed Adam’s sinless spiritual nature, He becomes Adam’s example, but not an example for fallen humanity” (*Saviour of the World. The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel* (PPPA, Boise, Idaho, 1996), 183).

**Answer:** If we follow Sequeira’s particular logic, we would have to conclude that the reverse would also be true. If Christ had assumed our fallen spiritual nature, He could also not be an example to Adam, nor be His savior, because Adam sinned with a sinless nature, and Christ would have overcome with a sinful nature. In other words, Jesus might have empathized with our temptation, but not Adam’s, or be in his place.

Happily that’s not the logic of the Bible. Christ is not only our example, but also the Atonement for Adam’s sin that all of us inherit. We are all included in the defeat of the first Adam, and if we accept the second Adam whom heaven proposes to us, we can be included in His victory (Rom 5). Thanks to the

second opportunity the Lord gives us, Christ becomes our example. By converting our heart and soul to the gospel, made possible by the Holy Ghost, we can look to Christ as our example and seek to imitate Him.

Precisely because we inherit “sin,” “guilt” and condemnation from the first Adam, as we have already seen, it is impossible for us to rid ourselves of the stigma or stain of the race. Only someone completely free from that damning inheritance could overcome and become our Savior.

“*Christ steps in and passes over the ground where Adam fell, enduring every test in man’s behalf. He redeems Adam’s disgraceful failure and fall by coming forth from the trial untarnished*” (MR 236). “Christ, the propitiation for our sins, declared: “I will stand in Adam’s place. I will take upon myself the penalty of his sin. He shall have another trial. I will secure for him a probation. He shall have the privileges and the opportunities of a free man, and be allowed to exercise his God-given power of choice” (AU Gleaner 08-19-03). “

“Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been *placed in Adam’s position*; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain” (DA 117).

**5. To prove that Christ assumed our fallen spiritual nature, they take statements from E. G. White that say we can attain the perfect character of Christ, which would prove according to them that someone like Christ could have overcome sin also with a spiritual fallen nature.**

**Respuesta:** No. The process is just the reverse. Because Christ overcame, we, with our fallen nature, can also overcome. But with a noticeable difference. Christ was born in holiness, while we become holy when we have the power to think for ourselves. Christ maintained his holiness, his perfection, from the cradle to his crucifixion. We must grow in holiness as long as our life lasts.

But can we really attain the perfection of Christ? Some prelapsarians say we cannot and accuse some postlapsarians of perfectionism and legalism. For if we conclude that Christ could overcome with a fallen nature without the need for a Savior, then we too could overcome sin without the need for His salvation. In this context, Christ would serve only as justification for past sins, but not necessarily for our sanctification. Although perhaps no one expresses himself precisely in this manner, because of the legalistic critical spirit shown regarding diet and dress and charges leveled regarding these things, some seem to agree with this accusation.

The reason given by many prelapsarians to reject the idea that we cannot be perfect is that Christians are not keeping the law of God perfectly. And we agree that no one but Christ is perfect. But that’s not why we’re going to neglect the importance of growing up in holiness. We tell radical postlapsarians that we need Christ’s justification not only to solve the guilt of our past sins, but also throughout the whole process of our sanctification. And we tell radical prelapsarians that by the careless and indifferent way of living, they seem to give reason to those who accuse them of libertines and *antinomians* (faith without law).

This is a very extensive topic that we cannot consider in detail here. In two messages I recently filmed on youtube I further address the arguments that are made on one side and the other. They’ll be available to everyone soon. Here we will be satisfied to mention the essentials. Let us begin by saying that both positions on the human nature of Christ are represented, those who believe that we can keep God’s law, and those that believe that we cannot keep it perfectly.

Those who advocate for *yes, we can*, accuse those who claim that the law of God cannot be kept of *antinomianism*. And they believe that, unlike Christ who was perfect since He was begotten, our perfection is progressive, and will attain its maximum expression equivalent to that of Christ in the last generation, that of the 144,000 (Rev 7:4-8; 14:1-5). Those who believe that *we cannot* keep the law insist that even the last generation will not be different from previous generations, for in their opinion, the last faithful survivors will be saved like everyone else, by grace, not by works. And some go further, and deny that the 144,000 represent the last generation. They believe, against all logic, that this number is another way of referring to the great multitude which embrace all generations.

But no one says that the last generation will be saved by works, nor that the perfection they obtain is meritorious. We say that God will lead that generation to a unique experience as a people where Christ's sinless character will appear in all its splendor. There are several unfounded mutual accusations between "liberals" and "conservatives," because the positions assumed in both sides are misunderstood. And while the tendency exists of those who want to keep justification and are not very interested in sanctification, it is also true that others are more interested in sanctification than justification, as if sanctification no longer required justification to grow spiritually, something that must occur in pilgrims until their entry into the eternal homeland.

### ***We can't***

There are arguments that can be made for the negative view, *we can't*. Let us look at the following inspired statements, which we must take into account in our desire to imitate Christ, so as not to be discouraged when we fail in our attempts to be like Him.

*"We can never equal the Pattern, because it is infinite goodness practiced in His human nature, [yet] we should make determined efforts with all the powers of our being to follow His example" (16 MR 199). "You cannot equal the copy, but you can resemble it and, according to your ability, do likewise" (2 T 170). "The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts" (SC 57-58).*

So every effort we make to keep the law of God will not be free from imperfections. Our perfection is given by faith in Christ. His perfect righteousness is imparted to us so that God can look at us as being as perfect as His Son. Let us never forget that:

*"Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin" (Mar 78). "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isa 64:6).*

Our perfection is in Christ.

*"Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification... We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute. Ye are accepted in the Beloved" (2 SM 32-33).*

*"Through the atoning blood of Christ the sinner is set free from bondage and condemnation; through the perfection of the sinless Substitute and Surety, he may run in the race of humble obedience to all God's commandments. Without Christ he is under the condemnation of the law, always a sinner, but through faith in Christ he is made just before God" (1 SM 330).*

### ***Yes, we can!***

Again, can we obtain the Christian perfection that Jesus revealed in his earthly life? Potentially yes!

*"Everyone who by faith obeys God's commandments, will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression" (Mar 224). "Exact obedience is required, and those who say that it is not possible to live a perfect life throw upon God the imputation of injustice and untruth" (RH, February 7, 1957).*

How may we harmonize these two kind of statements of the Spirit of Prophecy which appear to be contradictory? We can potentially and must keep the law of God. But we come with inherited and acquired

tendencies toward evil, so our perfection will be always progressive and always by grace. So, our perfection is in Christ.

*“Christ imputes to us his sinless character, and presents us to the Father in his own purity. There are many who think that it is impossible to escape from the power of sin, but the promise is that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. We aim too low. The mark is much higher. Our minds need expansion, that we may comprehend the significance of the provision of God. We are to reflect the highest attributes of the character of God” (RH, July 12, 1892).*

*“Christ clothed his divinity with humanity, and endured the test upon the point of appetite, ambition, and love of the world, thus making it possible for man to keep the commandments of God through his imputed righteousness” (ST June 18, 1894).*

It is the perfection of Christ which is imputed to us when we make efforts to keep the law. We advance “from glory to glory” until being transformed into His very image and resemblance (1 Cor 13:18).

On the other hand, does it mean that we will never reach the summit of sanctification? That is impossible on our part. Our task is to grow by imitating the Pattern that was given to us, without ever pretending to reach absolute perfection. However, what is impossible for us is possible for God depending on the circumstances and providences through which He leads his children.

The experience through which those who will be sealed by God at the end of the contest will cause all the scum of this world in them to be purged, and the pure gold of Christ’s character will fully shine. Human work will not then be highlighted, but the divine ability and power to uphold all those who humbly submit to that final test, sinless as Adam before the fall and Christ during His ministry,.

*“God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ’s character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through co-operation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God’s assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory” (AA 531-2).*

*“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own” (COL 69).*

*“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation... Christ declared of Himself: ‘The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me’ (John 14:30). Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father’s commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble” (GC 623).*

#### **6. They emphasize some statements of the Spirit of Prophecy on Christ’s assumption of our sinful nature, without considering them in the light of all the statements inspired on the subject.**

**Answer:** Being that we address this point in our prelapsarian analysis, here we will emphasize that these quotations refer to the physical nature of Christ, or to His substitutional assumption of our sinful nature. Let us keep in mind that He had no “old man” to bury like we have to do, excepting our “old man” which He bore vicariously to the grave. “Our old man was crucified with him” (Rom 6:6; see Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). Let us look at quotations some postlapsarians use to presume that Jesus possessed a sinful spiritual nature.

**a) “He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted” (MM 181).**

To help us understand this statement, let us paraphrase it first, after which we will add two other quotations that show a clearly vicarious or substitute character.

“He took upon His sinless [spiritual] nature [without the stain, stigma or condemnation of Adam], our sinful nature [with all its sequels in vicarious or substitutive way, or in His physical heritage], that He might know how to succor those that are tempted.”

“*He never bore disease in His own flesh, but he carried the sickness of others.* When suffering humanity pressed about Him He who was in the health of perfect manhood was as one afflicted with them” (3 SM 133). “*He took upon him humanity* that he might know the infirmities and temptations of humanity, that he might know how to help and save men. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. *Was he not perfect before?—Yes. But he was made a perfect Saviour, learning obedience by the things which he suffered*” (ST 5-20-89, 8).

It is certainly in one of these two senses aforementioned that E.G. White also wrote the following quotation that we discussed in the prelapsarian context:

“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” (DA 117).

Other quotes in the substitutional context.

“He took human nature, and *bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race.* He, who knew no sin, *became sin for us*” (1 SM 268).

He carried these weaknesses and degenerations of the race (of our sinful nature), contemplating human suffering and empathizing with their struggles, but without possessing their propensities.

“He is *a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions.* As the sinless One, *His nature recoiled from evil. He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin*” (7 SDABC 455).

I quote here the good summary found in the book *The Adventist Church Believes... (28 Fundamental Doctrines)*, which appears in chapter 4 entitled, “God the Son.”

“His spiritual faculties were free from any taint of sin. Consequently His holy nature was extremely sensitive. Any contact with evil pained Him. So, because He suffered in proportion to the perfection of His holiness, temptation brought more suffering to Jesus than to anyone else.”

**b) “Coming, as He did, as a man, <to meet and be subjected to> with all the evil tendencies to which man is heir, <working in every conceivable manner to destroy his faith>, He made it possible for Himself to be buffeted by human agencies inspired by Satan, the rebel who had been expelled from heaven.” Lt 303, 1903.**

**Answer:** According to the information that I received, the words “to meet and be subjected to,” would have been added by E. G. White. She often added or took away words and statements by advice of others who helped her in the edition of her writings. In this case, the added part seems not to fit well in the edition. It looks incomplete. Even so, not only the context of this statement, but also everything that she wrote on the subject, may help us to understand well that statement.

The context of the entire statement shows us something that she repeated several times, and it is that Christ would come “in the likeness of a man,” not in equal conditions. Literally, the phrase starts saying:

“When Christ first announced to the heavenly host His mission and work in the world, He declared that He was to leave His position of dignity and disguise His holy mission by assuming the likeness of a man, when in reality He was the Son of the infinite God.”

In consequence, we may understand her intension in that letter in the light of all what she wrote on the subject. What did Jesus have to meet or being subject to or to whom? Did He have to meet His presumable own evil tendencies or to the evil tendencies of the human beings who tried to destroy His faith? It is obvious that He had not the evil tendencies that afflict the human beings. What an horror to thing so!

He had not our evil propensities that affect the sons of Adam. On the contrary, we could see that He was free from all those evil propensions.

“There should not be the faintest misgiving in regard to *the perfect freedom from sinfulness in the human nature of Christ*” (17 MR 26). “His spiritual faculties were free from any taint of sin” (ST 12-09-97). “He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but *not the sinfulness of man*” (ST May 29, 1901).

Let us consider several quotes of E. G. White on what kind of subjection Jesus had in His earthly life.

He “became *subject to temptation*, even as we are!” (DG 61). “He was made *subject to Satan's temptations*” (YI, May 14, 1884). “He was *subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed*, ‘that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses’” [Matthew 8:17] (17 MR 25; FLB 49). “*He was subjected to poverty from His first entrance into the world. He was subject to disappointment and trial in His own home, among His own brethren*” (3 SM 129). “*He was subject to inconveniences that human nature is subjected to*. He breathed the air of the same world we breathe. He stood and traveled in the same world we inhabit” (3 SM 130).

“*He was subject to the frailties of humanity*, and as he journeyed from Judea to Galilee, *he was weary with labor and travel. Hungry and thirsty*, he tarried to rest at Jacob's well” (ST, April 22, 1897). “*Though Jesus was subject to His parents*, He began at a very early age to act for Himself in the formation of His character. While His mother was His first human teacher, He was constantly receiving an education from His Father in heaven” (FE 439). “*He took the nature of man, suffered the inconvenience that humanity is subject to*, endured our temptations, and became a partaker of the sorrows, griefs, and disappointments of men” (HM Dec 1, 1894).

But He didn't have a carnal mind, because:

“*The carnal [or natural] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*’ Human nature could not keep the law, even if it would. Apart from Christ, without union with him, we can do nothing” (ST May 30, 1895). But Jesus “*was subject to His will [that of His Father], and obedient to all His commands*. He kept His Father's statutes, precepts, and laws. He was continually seeking counsel of God, and was obedient to His will” (YI, August 23, 1894; SD 128).

“Now, since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and *free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death* (Heb 2:14-15).

**c) “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3).**

**Answer:** Some postlapsarians believe that the Son of God condemned sin by possessing a sinful spiritual nature like ours. No, please! Never say this! He condemned sin by living a perfect life in the human flesh,



in a human nature that was similar, not equal to our spiritual fallen nature.

“He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was God in the flesh” (DA 311).

***d) “Satan, the fallen angel, had declared that no man could keep the law of God after the disobedience of Adam. He claimed the whole race under his control. The Son of God placed Himself in the sinner’s stead, and passed over the ground where Adam fell” (3 SM 136).***

**Answer:** Some postlapsarians argue that, according to this statement, Jesus had to come with a spiritual fallen nature to deny the accusations of Satan who said that man, after the disobedience of Adam, could not keep the law of God. But the context of the whole statement is clear. Just before that statement, we find that “the world’s Redeemer passed over the ground where Adam fell because of his disobeying the expressed law of Jehovah; and the only begotten Son of God came to our world as a man, to reveal to the world that men could keep the law of God.” And the conclusion of that paragraph is that the Son of God “passed over the ground where Adam fell.”

Let us keep in mind that Satan accused God of having created man under an unrighteous law. He intended to prove this by the fact that Adam could not keep it, neither his offspring which inherited his fall. But Jesus came not only to demonstrate that Adam, such as God had created, could keep the law of God. He came also to redeem his fault. He did not die for Adam before the fall, but for Adam after the fall, and for all his offspring which died likewise for inheriting the same condemnation of their progenitor. Only by inheriting the spiritual nature of Adam before the fall whose only Father was God, and keeping Himself sinless like Adam before the fall, could Jesus pay the fault of Adam and his offspring. We become now heirs of the second Adam through whom we may become also sons of God again (Rom 8:17).

In the biblical logic all the offspring of Adam is included in the redemption of the first Adam performed by the second Adam. Because “just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:18-19).

Jesus came and fulfilled the law for us. He is our substitute. But He is more than that. He placed Himself at the head of humanity as the second Adam, as a “life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45). “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22). This means that the second Adam puts fallen man (including his offspring), in the position of Adam before the fall, and in the perfect perspective of the second Adam, if they accept the life He offers them. For this reason, thanks to conversion that Christ made possible for men, He can also be the pattern or example for the sons of Adam.

The Lord said: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Thus, Satan accusations are silenced, because God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions,” so that we may keep the law of God (Eph 2:5). It is just for this reason that God calls us today to vindicate the law of God, and the name of God and of His Son.

### **7. They want to lower Christ to our condition degraded by sin, rather than elevating us to the height of His holiness and perfection of character**

**Answer:** The Son of God should not be required to adopt the most degraded nature of human beings so that from there, with all their aberrant tendencies inherited and acquired, go back to holiness. No, He maintained His holiness and perfection from the cradle to the cross! It is we who must grow in holiness.

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect... Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and

straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus" (Philip 3:12-14).

On the other hand:

"We must not think that the liability of Christ to yield to Satan's temptations *degraded His humanity and He possessed the same sinful, corrupt propensities as man*" (16 MR 1211, 182). "It is the privilege of every believer in Christ *to possess Christ's nature, a nature far above that which Adam forfeited by transgression*. He who sees the Son by faith and believes in Him, is obedient to the commandments of God, and in this obedience he finds everlasting life" (UL 18). "Through faith human nature is assimilated with Christ's nature" (1 SM 251).

### **8. We need someone stronger than us to get us out of the well where we are.**

People who were once possessed by demons are at greater risk of falling under demons again if they want to do work among their former friends. This was seen more than once. People who were homosexual fell several times while trying to do work for their ex-partners who possessed that same inclination. It is often required that someone stronger come to help the weak to deliver them from the clutches of sin.

We have a weak and flawed "old man" to make die with all his carnal passions. Our old man has to be crucified for a "new man" to be implanted. This "new man" is Jesus who brought our old nature to the cross, and imparts to us His new nature which is cleansed of all contamination (Rom 6:6; Col 3:5).

We need someone who is not the same as us, who is not in the same well, but someone who is on a secure platform from where he can reach out of the abyss in which we find ourselves. Jesus well said that "if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matt 15:14). But Jesus was neither is blind. He came and "He saw and felt it all" (AG 163), and continues to see everything today from the heavenly sanctuary. He is the strong man, and He came to share His divine nature so that we may obtain victory.

"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3).

"*The sinful nature of man was weak*, and he was prone to the transgression of God's commandments. *Man had not the power* to do the words of God; that is why Christ came to our world, that He might give him moral power. There was no power in heaven or in earth but the power of Christ that could deliver..." (14 MR 1094, 82). "The Son of God came to the earth because he saw that moral power in man is weak" (YI 12-28-99, 2).

### **Summary of certain important points**

There are those who become entangled with their preconceived ideas as they read many quotations from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Here, therefore, we will summarize some important issues discussed above. Let us especially highlight the fact that *sin is an inheritance*.

1. We agree that sin is transgression of the law, and that in the judgment of God, no one will be punished for sins he did not commit.

2. But sin is more than transgression of the law. As the Spirit of Prophecy says, confirming what the Bible says as well, sin is an inheritance. Adam could not confer upon his offspring an inheritance of holiness that he no longer had, and therefore his death sentence passed to all his offspring.

3. Consequently, no baby who never transgressed the law can live eternally if it is not for the redemption of the One who did not receive sin as an inheritance, and became therefore our substitute. This fact doesn't

mean that a baby will receive the degree of punishment that corresponds to his parents and goes back to Adam. His inheritance is death, but not the suffering of evildoers.

- In other words, if the Redeemer had not come, or if the plan of salvation had failed, no baby would have lived eternally even if he had never sinned

4. We are born in sin, or in flesh of sin (that is, with a sinful nature). Christ, on the other hand, came “in the likeness of flesh of sin”, which is not the same. And He “condemned sin in the flesh,” that is, in the human nature. To infer that the Lord condemned sin in the flesh of sin is to go beyond what the text says.

5. To say that Christ must have struggled with tendencies or propensities to evil is an abomination. He had to fight with temptations similar to ours which in Him, had to do mostly with His mission. There is not a single reference of a moral temptation of Christ in the Bible.

- This error of Andreasen regarding the fallen nature of Adam in the second Adam led many to misunderstand him with regard to the theology of the last generation. For this reason he was accused of perfectionism, something that he did not explicitly teach but that opens the doors to legalism (there is abundant evidence in our church of that).

6. Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit and, like Adam before the fall, He was a natural son of God. We are naturally born evil, and we are children of anger and condemnation, like Adam after the fall. We are granted the Spirit by grace, not by natural right, and we are adopted in Christ as sons of God by adoption. By the grace of Christ, every baby and adult has access to eternal life as an undeserved gift. But Jesus could go back to heaven and leave this world, because He deserved eternal life. No so with us.

## **Conclusion**

It is too bad that a subject as important as the incarnation of the Son of God should be overlooked by many who do not wish to participate at all in the dogmatic discussions between radical prelapsarians and postlapsarians. However, the following declaration has been given us regarding the importance of this theme.

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh” (1 SM 244).

As a conclusion of our study we will draw two statements from the book which deals with the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church, approved by the congress of the General Conference in Dallas, Texas, in 1980.

“When He [Jesus] took on human nature the race had already deteriorated through 4,000 years of sin on a sin-cursed planet... Christ took a human nature that, compared with Adam’s unfallen nature, had decreased in physical and mental strength—though He did so without sinning...” “Jesus Christ took upon Himself our nature with all its liabilities, but He was free from hereditary corruption or depravity and actual sin” o” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe ...*, chap 4, points 5 and 6).

What does it mean to be a son of Adam with a fallen, sinful nature? It involves receiving an evil inherited tendency, inclination, or propensity, to which acquired tendencies are added. But it is more than that. It involves inheriting Adam’s sin and condemnation, though not the same degree of responsibility for sin which the judgment will determine for everyone in the end of the world. This is what the judgments executed by God over different peoples in ancient times teach us. In those judgments even the newborn babies died. Those judgments show us that no one inherits life, but death by Adam’s sin. “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (1 Pet 1:18).

Jesus was free of all that inheritance doomed to failure. This is the reason why He did not inherit the sentence of death which weighted upon Adam and all his offspring and, therefore, He didn't inherit the stigma of sin of Adam that we all have printed in our flesh. Otherwise, He could not have abandoned this world without hope as He almost did in Getsemane, to return to heaven. He assumed vicariously the sin of Adam that all Adam's offspring inherited.

This is the reason why we needed a second Adam to redeem us. And the marks that this sinful inheritance left in the physical nature and in the mental and moral power or energy of humanity, left their traces also in the body of Christ. That has nothing to do with a tendency or inclination to immorality. He was holy, immaculate, the Son of God, without inclination to sin even in thought.

Because he was able to keep His holiness intact, without sin, Jesus was able to offer His life as a perfect offering for sin, and become our Substitute and Savior. By the conversion made through the intervention of the Holy Ghost, we can look at Him as our example worthy of imitation. With His power and by faith in Him, we can triumph over sin and death, and obtain eternal life.

### **A study that will never run out**

Let me share with you several quotations from E. G. White that show us that the study of the nature of Christ, His life, death, and resurrection will never be exhausted. It will be our privilege to meditate eternally on the character of the One who delivered us from death and sin, and elevates us to the immeasurable heights of sanctification.

“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” (5 BC 1128). “The theme of redemption is one that angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity” (Mar 365). “We are to look at His life, study His character, and copy the pattern. What Christ was in His perfect humanity, we must be; for we must form characters for eternity” (TM 173). “The excellence of Christ is to be our study through time and eternity” (GCDB, March 6, 1899 par. 4).

“You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving his Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it. Yet as we study the Bible, and meditate upon the life of Christ and the plan of redemption, these great themes will open to our understanding more and more” (RH, Oct 22, 1908).

How much I yearn, wholeheartedly, for the day to come when I will no longer need to fight against the sin and wickedness of this world, and not even to search for prophecies because they will all have been fulfilled! (1 Cor 13:8). I want to be able to dedicate myself entirely to composing songs of gratitude to my Savior for such great love manifested towards me by living in this corrupted and hostile world, and by giving His life to redeem me! I want to contemplate the beauty of His character that will be revealed more and more as I can project myself forward, into the endless times of eternity! Amen.