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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE IN
THE VIEWS OF HERBERT DOUGLASS AND WOODROW WHIDDEN
ON THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST

by

Cyril Marshall

Adviser: Jerry Moon

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: AN ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE IN THE VIEWS OF HERBERT DOUGLASS AND WOODROW WHIDDEN ON THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST

Name of researcher: Cyril Marshall

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jerry Moon, Ph.D.

Date completed: August 2022

The human nature of Christ is one of the more controverted topics within Seventh-day Adventism. This dissertation analyzes the works of two influential writers on this topic—Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden—comparing their use of Ellen White’s writings on the human nature of Christ.

The purpose of this study is to discover the hermeneutical principles they each employed in interpreting Ellen White’s writing on Christ’s humanity.

The research utilizes primary source materials from all three authors, as well as secondary source materials, including books, journals, magazines, papers, and course notes.

The author concludes that there are statements in the writings of Ellen White that can be interpreted in a postlapsarian manner. There are also statements that can be interpreted in a prelapsarian manner. Postlapsarian-leaning statements tend to emphasize Christ's role as Example to humanity whereas prelapsarian statements tend to emphasize His role as Savior of humanity. Within the writings of Ellen White, then, there exists a balanced tension in regards to the human nature of Christ, in that she needed elements from both categories to fully describe her teaching on the human nature of Christ.

The analysis of the respective hermeneutics of Douglass and Whidden reveals a subtle difference between them. Both Douglass and Whidden recognized the twin emphasis within Ellen White's missives on the humanity of Christ—her need to use some elements of *both* prelapsarian *and* postlapsarian categories to express her complete thought. Although Douglass recognized this twin emphasis in principle, he did not emphasize it in practice. Whidden, on the other hand, recognized and emphasized the twin emphasis both in principle and in practice. Thus Douglass's emphasis on White's postlapsarian statements, and his lack of emphasis on her prelapsarian statements, led him to opposite conclusions from Whidden on the human nature of Christ.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Cyril Marshall
August 2022

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Cyril Marshall

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Faculty Adviser,
Jerry Moon
Professor of Church History

Director of Ph.D./Th.D. Program
John Reeve

Denis Fortin
Professor of Historical Theology

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Jiri Moskala

Martin Hanna
Associate Professor of
Systematic Theology

Date approved

Abner Hernandez
Assistant Professor of Church History

Darius Jankiewicz
Professor of Theology
Field/Ministerial Secretary at
South Pacific Division of SDA

Dedication

To honor my mother's memory

To celebrate my wife's support

To inspire my sons' future

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CG</i>	<i>Child Guidance</i>
<i>COL</i>	<i>Christ's Object Lessons</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>The Desire of Ages</i>
<i>EW</i>	<i>Early Writings</i>
<i>FW</i>	<i>Faith and Works</i>
<i>GC</i>	<i>The Great Controversy</i>
<i>GCB</i>	<i>General Conference Bulletin</i>
<i>IHP</i>	<i>In Heavenly Places</i>
<i>Lt</i>	Letter
<i>MB</i>	<i>Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing</i>
<i>ML</i>	<i>Manuscript Releases</i>
<i>Ms</i>	Manuscript
<i>PP</i>	<i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i>
<i>QOD</i>	<i>Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine</i>
<i>RH</i>	<i>Review and Herald</i> Articles
<i>SC</i>	<i>Steps to Christ</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>Sons and Daughters of God</i>
<i>SDABC</i>	<i>The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</i> (7 vols.)
<i>7A SDABC</i>	<i>The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</i> (vol. 7A)

<i>SG</i>	<i>Spiritual Gifts</i> (4 vols.)
<i>SM</i>	<i>Selected Messages</i> (Book 1, 2, and 3)
<i>ST</i>	<i>The Signs of the Times</i> (Periodical)
<i>T</i>	<i>Testimonies for the Church</i> (9 vols.)
<i>TMK</i>	<i>That I May Know Him</i>
<i>YI</i>	<i>The Youth's Instructor</i> (Periodical)
1888	<i>The Ellen White 1888 Materials</i> (4 vols.)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The issue of Christ's human nature is not new in Adventism. When righteousness by faith took center stage at the 1888 General Conference Session there began to be a greater emphasis upon Christ and what He has done, in terms of justification by faith, and what He is doing in the lives of believers, in terms of sanctification by faith.¹ Ellen White, along with Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner, later joined by W. W. Prescott, began to place a heavy emphasis upon Christ, in His divinity and His humanity as the sinner's only source of righteousness.² Regarding Christ's human nature, even before the 1888 General Conference Session, White saw Jesus as having taken fallen human nature.³

In 1874 she said the "Son of God humbled himself and took man's nature after the race had wandered four thousand years from Eden, and from their original state of purity

¹George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 117-125.

²During the decade of the 1890s Ellen White published *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), and *Christ's Object Lessons* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1900). All these works emphasized Christ's teachings, person and mission and played a critical role in the development of Adventist doctrine, especially its Christology.

³The majority of her writings on Christ's human nature are from the post-1888 period. See the following references for a sampling of some of her pre-1888 writings on the topic: Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4 vols. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1858-64), 1:25; White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing, 1858), 4a:115; White, "Practical Remarks," *Review and Herald*, April 19, 1870, 138, 139; White, "The Life of Christ," *Review and Herald*, December 31, 1872, 18, 19; White, "Watchfulness and Prayer," *Review and Herald*, October 11, 1881, 225; White, "Lessons in Humility and Love," *Signs of the Times*, January 15, 1885, 33, 34. Her writings on the topic before 1888 provided the initial framework within which her matured conceptualizations on Christ's humanity were built from the 1890s into early in the twentieth century.

and uprightness.”⁴ Nevertheless she also portrayed Christ as being “brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil.”⁵

Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott all followed her lead as regards Christ having taken a fallen human nature. Just prior to the start of the 1888 General Conference Session Waggoner published his *Gospel in the Book of Galatians* which incorporated into his soteriology the concept that Christ had a fallen human nature.⁶ In 1890 he saw Christ as having “all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject.”⁷ Speaking at the 1895 General Conference Session, Prescott claimed that Jesus took the same humanity as all other descendants of Adam, and that this is the “most glorious truth in Christianity.”⁸ Also at the 1895 General Conference Session, Jones, the chief devotional speaker, took White’s understanding even further and saw Christ as having “the same tendencies to sin that are in you and me.”⁹ For him there was “not a particle of difference” between Christ and the rest of humanity.¹⁰

⁴Ellen White, “The Temptation of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874, 51.

⁵Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1868-1871), 2:202.

⁶Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* (Oakland, CA: n.p, 1888), 61.

⁷Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Melbourne, Australia: Echo, 1890), 26, 27.

⁸W. W. Prescott, “The Divine Human Family: All in Him,” *General Conference Bulletin*, February 6, 1895, 24.

⁹Alonzo T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message, no. 14,” *General Conference Bulletin*, February 21, 1895, 266.

¹⁰Alonzo T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message, no. 13,” *General Conference Bulletin*, February 19, 1895, 233.

George R. Knight points out a pertinent reaction to Jones' statement regarding Christ having the "same tendencies to sin that are in you and me." In his biography on Jones he indicates that some of the delegates at the 1895 General Conference confronted him with a statement from White's *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:202, where she saw Christ as being a "brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions." Jones countered this with another sermon where he portrayed Christ as having "sinful flesh" but not "sinful mind."¹¹ By his response Jones inadvertently admitted that there was least one particle of difference between Christ's human nature and that of the rest of humanity.¹² Nevertheless, postlapsarianism, the idea that Christ took a fallen human nature, became basically normative within Seventh-day Adventism for the next half a century. Since some used the terms "fallen nature" and "sinful nature" synonymously, it is not surprising that this usage led to misconceptions when applied to the nature of Christ. This view of Christ's sinful human nature also opened the way for an emphasis on sanctification and perfection in Adventist soteriology, as will be seen later in this study.

By the mid-twentieth century, a number of Adventist theologians had come to reconsider the meaning of sin in humanity, its consequences and ontological extent. The doctrine of original sin that had been rejected for so long came to be viewed as containing essential truth, neglect of which had produced a semi-Pelagian understanding of sanctification. Many theologians, including Edward Heppenstall, began to teach a

¹¹George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), 137, 138.

¹²See "Editorial," [by W. W. Prescott?] *Review and Herald*, December 21, 1905, 3, 4. This editorial was written in response to a reader who objected to an editorial which stated that Christ came to the world "in sinful flesh" when the Bible states that He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" Rom 8:3.) See also *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1889), 115.

version of the doctrine of original sin and to incorporate it into Adventist theology.¹³

During the mid-1950s a number of meetings were held between a select group of Seventh-day Adventist theologians, LeRoy E. Froom, W. E. Read and Roy A. Anderson, and three Evangelical thought leaders, Walter Martin, George R. Cannon and Donald G. Barnhouse,¹⁴ resulting in the publication of the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.¹⁵ This publication gave answers to specific questions posed by the Evangelical leaders. The humanity of Christ was one such question area.¹⁶ The authors of *Questions on Doctrine* made considerable use of Ellen White's writings on the

¹³For a basic explanation of original sin, see the section, "Preliminary Note on Theological Terms" at the beginning of chapter 2.

¹⁴Among the attending factors to this dialogue are the basic soteriological and theological backgrounds of the Evangelicals and the Seventh-day Adventists. First, the Evangelicals were Calvinists whereas the Adventists were Arminians. Second, the Evangelicals had a history of seeing Adventists as teaching righteousness by works. Third, the nature of Christ, both His divinity and humanity, was a point of contest since the Evangelicals had ample evidence of Adventists being semi-Arian as regards Christ's divinity and holding on to a theologically suspect understanding of Christ's humanity—that He had a sinful human nature. Both of these Adventist understandings of Christ's fundamental nature, from the perspective of the Evangelicals, would necessarily disqualify Christ from being humanity's savior from sin. See George R. Knight, "Historical and Theological Introduction to the Annotated Edition," *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrines: Annotated Edition*, xiii-xv.

¹⁵*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), referred to hereafter as *Questions on Doctrine* or *QOD*. The main authors of *QOD* were LeRoy E. Froom, W. E. Read, and Roy Allan Anderson. For detailed commentary, see *Questions on Doctrine: Annotated Edition*, edited and with an Introduction by George R. Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003). The publication of this work led to reactions both within and without Adventism. Juhyeok Nam's dissertation, "Reactions to the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and Questions on Doctrine, 1955–1971" (Ph.D. thesis, Andrews University, 2005), provides the most extensive treatment on the topic. A. Leroy Moore also examines the reactions to the publication of *QOD* in his *Questions on Doctrine Revisited* (Ithaca, MI: AB Publishing, 2005). George R. Knight has given an excellent historical contextual background to the publication and reaction to *QOD* in his "Historical and Theological Introduction to the Annotated Edition" *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrines: Annotated Edition*, xiii-xxxvi.

¹⁶See, George R. Knight, "Historical and Theological Introduction to the Annotated Edition" *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrines: Annotated Edition*, xv-xvii. Later in this study I will examine the works of Edward Heppenstall. In looking at his writings on the human nature of Christ we will see that for him, and others at that time, there began to be a change in the basic trajectory of their soteriology. One of the main reasons for this change was an acceptance of the doctrine of original sin. Thus, as the Adventists and Evangelicals conferred with each other the new generation of Adventist

topic and portrayed her writings as saying that Jesus' human nature was akin to Adam's before the fall, prelapsarianism.¹⁷ The opposite view, postlapsarianism, had been the dominant view within Adventism from the 1890s to that time.

The reactions to *QOD* among Adventists were quick.¹⁸ One of the strongest opponents of the prelapsarian position taken in *QOD* was M. L. Andreasen. Andreasen was a strong proponent of the postlapsarian view and concluded that the church had sacrificed its doctrine of Christ on the altar of theological acceptance.¹⁹ Additionally, the postlapsarian position was important to him because it was an integral part of his "final generation" theology.²⁰ Ellen White had stated that "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be

theologians had to contend with the former generations who not only, for the most part, rejected the doctrine of original sin, but had little qualm with seeing Jesus as having a sinful human nature.

¹⁷The authors of *QOD* inserted the heading "Took Sinless Human Nature" to some of Ellen White's statements on the humanity of Christ and that heading was not necessarily consistent with all the contents of the quotes. See *QOD*, 650-653. Even though this came in an appendix of Ellen White's writings on the nature of Christ, the authors were attempting to show that the "alleged" position of Adventists seeing Christ as having a sinful human nature was not historically consistent. As far as they were concerned the majority of Adventists authors have consistently seen Christ as having a sinless human nature. History has shown the allegation to be true and the authors of *QOD* to be inaccurate on this point.

¹⁸Even though *QOD* was published more than 50 years ago there are still reactions to it within Adventism. The atonement and the humanity of Christ were the areas which evoked the strongest reactions in the immediate aftermath of its publication. Today the atonement is not as much discussed as the humanity of Christ. In 2007 the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary held a symposium on the 50th anniversary of *QOD*. The papers presented at this conference illuminate the debate over *QOD*, and even more so the debate over the humanity of Christ within Adventism.

¹⁹The bulk of Andreasen's written reaction to the publication of *QOD* is found in his *Letters to the Churches* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn, 1982.) A full treatment of his reactions can be found in Nam's dissertation, pages 247-344.

²⁰See M. L. Andreasen's *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937) 279-297, and *The Book of Hebrews*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948). Andreasen's "final generation" theology is one of his enduring contributions to Seventh-day Adventist eschatology. This theology weaves together the atonement, soteriology, eschatology, and Christology.

perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”²¹

Andreasen adopted and adapted this concept into his final generation theology.²²

In building his theology Andreasen also adopted a hermeneutical model promoted by Alonzo T. Jones, which saw Ellen White’s writings as being the means whereby the Bible is to be studied.²³ Andreasen thus became the most active link between Jones and Seventh-day Adventist expositors on Christ’s humanity in the post-*QOD* era.

Consequently, every writer on the topic since then must treat with Andreasen’s thought in one way or another.

During the immediate post-*QOD* era Edward Heppenstall,²⁴ LeRoy Froom, and Roy Allan Anderson were among the foremost proponents of the prelapsarian model.²⁵ Later on Desmond Ford became one of the more forceful proponent of the prelapsarian model. Heppenstall gave the most systematic treatment on the topic and influenced a generation of later theologians through his lecturing at the Seventh-day Adventist

²¹Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1900), 69.

²²See Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937) 279-297. Paul Evans has treated Andreasen’s “Final Generation” theology in his Ph.D. dissertation “A Historical-contextual Analysis of the Final-generation Theology of M. L. Andreasen,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2010).

²³Alonzo T. Jones, “The Gifts: Their Presence and Object,” *The Home Missionary*, Extra, December 1, 1894, 8-13.

²⁴Heppenstall’s position was not the strict prelapsarianism as is found in *QOD*. Heppenstall held that Christ’s human nature was pre-fall in that He did not have the spiritual bent toward sin as the rest of Adam’s posterity, but post-fall in the physical sense, since Christ’s physical body was affected by the consequences of sin like the rest of Adam’s posterity.

²⁵Heppenstall’s *The Man Who Is God: A Study of the Person and Nature of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), is his most thorough treatment on the subject. Froom’s position is woven into *Movement of Destiny*, his work on the development of Adventist history. Anderson, who was primarily an evangelist but worked rather closely with Froom in preparing *QOD*, gives his most extensive treatment on the topic in his *The God-Man: His Nature and Work* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970).

Theological Seminary. In his *The Man Who is God* he addresses the question of the fall and its effects upon humanity. For him sin is “spiritual” and is “caused by the alienation of the whole person from God.” Accordingly, this “alienated condition” cannot be applied to Christ.²⁶ Anderson shared a similar view and saw Jesus as being “sinless both in His nature and His life.”²⁷ This view, by no means universal within Adventism, ignited and sustained the debate. Among those who opposed the views of Heppenstall, Anderson, and Froom was Herbert Douglass.

Douglass considers Jesus as having a fallen human nature “weakened by millennia of sinful choices.” However, this weakened nature never caused Him to sin.²⁸ A proper understanding of Christ’s humanity is important to Douglass since he sees it as directly related to soteriology. In Douglass’s view Christ developed moral character in the same way as others do.²⁹ Douglass follows the lead of Andreasen, in incorporating his Christology, soteriology and eschatology and thereby creating what Douglass calls the “Harvest Principle.”³⁰ He makes liberal use of Ellen White’s writings on Christ’s humanity and sees every believer as having access to the same victory Jesus had since He was victorious in the same nature they have. This victorious life will be especially seen in

²⁶Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 126.

²⁷Anderson, *The God-Man: His Nature and Work*, 53.

²⁸Herbert Douglass, Edward Heppenstall, Hans K. LaRondelle, and C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1975), 40.

²⁹Herbert Douglass and Leo Van Dolson, *Jesus: The Benchmark of Humanity* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1977), 25.

³⁰Douglass, *The End: Unique Voice of Adventists about the Return of Jesus* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 65-80. Also see *Perfection*, 43. Here Douglass implies that a lack of clarity on the human nature of Christ is somewhat responsible for the delay in Jesus’ Second Advent.

the last generation of believers.³¹ Woodrow Whidden does not agree with Douglass' conceptualizations and posits a new model.

Whidden believes that it is “absolutely necessary” to consider Ellen White’s Christology in order to understand her soteriology.³² In his doctoral dissertation, “The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent Path to Perfection, 1836-1902,” he devoted a chapter of nearly one hundred pages to demonstrate the connection between her soteriology and Christology.³³ At the same time he believes that the prelapsarian and postlapsarian terms used in the past have contributed to the debate but not to the solution of the problem.³⁴ He sees the debate over Ellen White’s writings on Christ’s humanity as dating back to the 1890s, renewed in the 1950s, and ongoing in contemporary Adventism with a “satisfactory consensus” being “very hard to achieve.”³⁵ Therefore, he sets up a new paradigm, based on different terms, namely “uniqueness” and “identity.”³⁶

³¹Douglass, *Perfection*, 47-51.

³²Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation: A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 57.

³³Woodrow W. Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent Path to Perfection, 1836-1902” (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1989), 156-236.

³⁴Woodrow W. Whidden, “The Humanity of Christ Debate—What Did Ellen White Teach?” in *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium*, vol. 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research, 2006), 41-74. See also Woodrow W. Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry* October 1993, 5-9. Here Whidden decries the use of terms such as “*historic Adventism*, *traditional Adventism* and *new theology*.” He suggests the following terms as better replacements: “*Christian verities*, or *eternal verities* for basic doctrines embraced by Adventists and held by most other Christians, *essential Adventism* for that which is distinctively Adventist, *processive Adventism* for those issues that are important but still unsettled, and *nonessential Adventism* for that which is interesting but not central to Adventist self-understanding.”

³⁵Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 57.

³⁶Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ: A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 15, 16.

In Whidden's understanding, Ellen White variously emphasized Christ's "uniqueness" (difference from the rest of humanity), or His "identity" (likeness and solidarity) with the rest of humanity depending upon the particular doctrinal issue she was considering at the time. Accordingly, when dealing with the believer's victory over sin she emphasized Christ's identity with sinful humans and when dealing with Christ's role as sacrifice for sin she emphasized Christ's uniqueness.³⁷

Problem Statement

Ellen White's writings have been used rather extensively in the ongoing debate within Adventism over the human nature of Christ. However, even though both Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden make extensive use of her writings on that topic they arrive at different conclusions. Consequently, to evaluate Douglass's and Whidden's use of Ellen White's writings on Christ's human nature we need to know to what extent their different views have been shaped by their hermeneutical presuppositions.

Purpose Statement

This dissertation will examine the way Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden use Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity and identify their respective doctrines of soteriology and eschatology as providing shape to their Christology, thereby forming the hermeneutical presuppositions through which they interpret her writings on Christ's human nature.

³⁷Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 62.

Justification of the Study

This dissertation is important for five main reasons. First, even though the current debate on the human nature of Christ within Adventism has been ongoing for more than half a century; and even though the writings of Ellen White on the topic have been at its center, to date no one has undertaken a study on the way her writings on the topic have been used.

Second, Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden have both written rather extensively on the topic and are representative of the existing polarization. Resultantly, identifying their hermeneutical presuppositions will contribute towards recognizing the basic hermeneutics used in interpreting her writings on the human nature of Christ.

Third, the debate has at times been so heated that writers on the respective sides have tended to speak past each other. Consequently, the areas of commonality that can be found on all sides of the debate have not been brought to the fore.

Fourth, the issue of hermeneutical principles used in interpreting Ellen White's writings on the topic is in need of examination. If two writers use different hermeneutical principles to examine the same information it is highly likely that they will arrive at different conclusions.

Fifth, understanding the historical contexts and antecedents which influence the major players in the debate is essential in order to understand their hermeneutical principles and the conclusions they reach.

Scope and Delimitations

This dissertation proposes to examine Herbert Douglass's and Woodrow Whidden's use of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. In that sense it is

Christological but it will not deal with her writings on Christ's divinity except as they relate to His humanity.

Because their soteriology and eschatology impact the ways in which Douglass and Whidden couch their writings on Christ's human nature, it will be necessary to review their respective soteriology and eschatology. However, this examination will limit itself to the way these relate to Christ's human nature.

Ellen White's writings on Christ's human nature provide the background through which this study is being done and they play a very critical role. At the same time this dissertation is not merely an examination of her writings on the human nature of Christ but of the way her writings on the said topic have been used.

Methodology

This dissertation employs three main methodological approaches. First there is historical investigation. This method is necessary to trace the development of the historical contexts informing the human nature of Christ within Adventism. It also serves to identify the antecedents upon which the hermeneutical systems of Douglass and Whidden are built.

Second there is hermeneutical analysis. This is used to examine the ways Ellen White's writings are interpreted by Douglass and Whidden.

Third there is comparative analysis. Since this dissertation examines the writings of two authors on one topic it is necessary to compare and contrast the methods, they both use.

Primary as well as secondary sources, and published as well as unpublished sources are used throughout this dissertation. Primary sources also include personal correspondence, letters, personal interviews, emails, and sound recordings as necessary.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1, the present chapter, introduces the topic and includes the background of the study, purpose and problem statements, my scope and delimitations, methodology and the general direction of the rest of the study.

Chapter 2 focuses on a historical survey of individuals who have made contributions to the topic. In doing this survey the issues involved in the debate under examination will be placed in focus. Additionally, the thoughts and conceptualizations that have helped to frame the approaches to the topic will be identified. This chapter is of considerable importance to understanding the next three chapters.

Chapter 3 examines the work of Herbert Douglass as he dealt with Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ. The chapter will include a brief biographical sketch of Douglass as a means of identifying the historical framework within which his contributions took place. Following that the chapter will present his understanding of Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity.

Chapter 4 considers Woodrow W. Whidden's conceptualizations of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. His postulations are placed after those of Douglass because to a certain degree he reacts to Douglass. Like the previous chapter, this one will also include a brief biographical introduction.

Chapter 5 reaches the primary intention of this dissertation: to analyze and compare the ways Douglass and Whidden use Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ, and to evaluate the implications of their concepts.

Chapter 6 summarizes the earlier chapters, draws conclusions and their applications, and suggests areas for further study.

Review of Literature

Over the years there have been a number of works looking at the issue of Christology within Adventism. These works have contributed, in one way or another, to an understanding of this controversial area within Adventist theology.

Eric Claude Webster's *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* examines the respective Christologies of Ellen White, Ellet J. Waggoner, Edward Heppenstall and Herbert Douglass. His work provides considerable insights into Adventist Christology from its incipient stage through to the early 1980s. However, even though this work does a good comparative analysis of the Christologies of those four Adventist authors, it does not confine itself to the human nature of Christ nor does it deal with the issue of the use of Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ among Adventist authors.

Jean R. Zurcher's *Touched with Our Feelings* surveys Adventist teaching on Christ's humanity from the 1860s through the early 1990s. Zurcher argues for a return to the postlapsarian Christology. His work differs from Webster's in that he confines himself to the human nature of Christ within Adventism. However, his work does not get into the respective hermeneutics used by Adventist authors as they treat with Ellen White's writings on the said topic.

Ralph Larson's *The Word Was Made Flesh* is somewhat similar to Zurcher's in terms of the time period under review. Larson's work is very helpful in that it provides a list of published Adventist statements on the humanity of Christ from 1852 to 1952. However, Larson does not get into any detailed exposition of the listed statements except with the controversial "Baker Letter." Consequently, even though there is great benefit gained from his listing of statements, in chronological order at that, the work was not intended to provide any kind of analysis on the topic.

Jee Sanghoon's doctoral dissertation, "The Doctrine of the Human Nature of Christ: Developments of the Views Regarding the Human Nature of Jesus Christ Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church Between 1957 and 1988," takes a close examination of the human nature of Christ debate within Adventism. Since his work looks at the debate since the publication of the book *Questions on Doctrine*, it provides a good survey of publications and positions within Adventism since then. Furthermore, since it limits itself to the humanity of Christ there are considerable pertinent insights shared relative to my work. At the same time, it does not get into analyzing the hermeneutics of the various Adventist authors—especially with regard to their use of Ellen White's writings. Consequently, the above-mentioned works, though all helpful in one way or another with my work, do not tackle the question of hermeneutics at play in interpreting the writings of Ellen White on the human nature of Christ.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEBATE

Christology has been debated throughout Christian history. In Seventh-day Adventist history, Christology is also a hotly debated topic. Interestingly enough, the human nature of Christ has not always been hotly debated among Adventists.¹ Chapter 2 surveys the development of the Adventist debate on the human nature of Christ, in three historical periods. The first section examines developments in the 1890s and pays particular attention to the contributions of Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner. The second section focusses upon the period from the 1930s through to the 1970s and highlights the contributions of M. L. Andreasen and Edward Heppenstall. The third section, from the 1970s to the present, features the contributions of three duos—Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short, Colin Standish and Russell Standish, and Desmond Ford and Gillian Ford—and concludes with the work of A. Leroy Moore.

However, before delving into this historical development of the Adventist Christological debate, there are some theological terms that are germane to the discussion that must first be considered. The following terms, original sin, total depravity, prevenient grace, and Christian perfection, then, are the subject of this short exposé on theological terms.

¹With fullest regard to other Adventist groups, for the rest of this document the name Adventist is used in reference to Seventh-day Adventism.

Preliminary Note on Theological Terms

Original sin is one of those theological topics upon which there is no unanimity within Christianity in general, and Adventism, in particular. The core facets of the doctrine of original sin are: it is universal, inherited from Adam, leaves human beings totally depraved (no part of the human is unaffected by sin), results in inherited propensities of disobedience, separates humanity from God (all humans need salvation), results in inherited *subjective* guilt, and results in inherited *objective* consequences. Heppenstall, as we shall see later in this chapter, accepted all of these facets of original sin *except* the idea of inherited subjective guilt.²

One of the corollaries of original sin is total depravity. Total depravity is the theological idea that humans are affected by sin in every aspect, are lost, and are completely incapable of saving themselves. However, this term has a nuanced theological understanding. On the one hand, from the Augustinian/Calvinistic perspective, humans are completely incapable of even accepting salvation. This incapability is due to humans losing their free will as a result of the fall. For that reason, God arbitrarily decided to save some and damn others.³

On the other hand, the Arminian perspective *agrees* that total depravity makes humans incapable of exercising moral free will—except for a special act of grace, called *prevenient* grace, because it *precedes* faith. Prevenient grace is the means by which God

²See also Jesse Couenhoven, “Augustine’s Doctrine of Original Sin,” *Augustinian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005). https://www.academia.edu/1958072/St_Augustines_Doctrine_of_Original_Sin, (accessed October 17, 2022).

³For a more detailed understanding of Augustine’s perspective on total depravity, see <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105/npnf105.v.ii.iv.html?queryID=21424387&resultID=165483>, accessed

frees the will, so that the sinner can choose to believe. Arminius clearly stated that “the free will of human beings towards the true good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and weakened; but it is also imprisoned, destroyed, and lost.”⁴

Prevenient grace is the grace that goes before faith, frees the will, and begins to work on the conscience.⁵ Prevenient grace, according to Arminius, is an absolute necessity for the “illumination of the mind, the due ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good.” Prevenient grace infuses “good thoughts into the mind,” and “good desires into the affections,” and bends the “will to carry into execution good thoughts and good desires.”⁶

However, prevenient grace goes only so far and no further. It frees the will so that a person can choose to accept salvation. In the same manner that *prevenient* grace is needed to arouse faith and awaken the will in order to accept God’s offer of salvation, *continuing* grace is also needed to sanctify the believer. Grace works in the believer to avert temptations, assist in, and bring relief from temptation, and sustain the believer “against the flesh, the world, and Satan,” and in that great battle—the battle against temptation and sin—grace grants to the believer the enjoyment of victory.⁷

It is through this working of grace that the believer can go on to Christian perfection. Christian perfection, as John Wesley put it, is another term for “holiness.”

October 19, 2022. For a more detailed understanding of Calvin’s view of total depravity see, John Dillenberger, editor, *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1975), 158-163.

⁴James Arminius, Public Disputation XI, in *The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 2, translated by James Nichols and William Nichols, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 192; cf. 374, 375. See also, Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 150-151.

⁵James Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 2:196.

⁶James Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 2:700.

⁷James Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 2:700.

Perfect Christians are holy and holy Christians are perfect. Nevertheless, according to Wesley, there is no “absolute perfection on earth.” Christian perfection allows for “continual” growth in grace.⁸ Thus it is linear.

Ellen White agreed with this understanding of Christian perfection. For White, “neither Joseph, Daniel, nor any of the apostles claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than to knowingly sin against Him, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have acknowledged themselves to be sinners, unworthy of His great favors. They have felt their weakness and, sorrowful for their sins, have tried to copy the pattern Jesus Christ.”⁹

Therefore, as this work develops, it is done against the backdrop of an Adventist understanding of the aforementioned—and explicated—theological terms. Having said that, I return to the substantive purpose of this chapter—surveying the historical development of the Christological debate within Adventism. Because the foundations for that debate were laid in the 1890s, that period now becomes the center of focus.

Developments in the 1890s

Within the context of Adventist history, the names of Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner are closely associated with the 1888 General Conference Session.¹⁰ During the

⁸Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, editors, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 73.

⁹Ellen White, “The True Standard of Righteousness” *Review and Herald*, (August 25, 1885), 1-2.

¹⁰This work does not examine the 1888 General Conference Session except in relation to the human nature of Christ—and that, too, is limited to the contribution of Ellet J. Waggoner.

post-1888 era they were both heavily influential in Adventism, and their contributions on the human nature of Christ within Adventism are more than noteworthy. In examining the historical development of the debate on the humanity of Christ within Adventism, the contributions of this duo demand examination. Therefore, attention is now turned to the contributions of Alonzo T. Jones.

Alonzo T. Jones

Alonzo T. Jones was certainly one of the most influential Seventh-day Adventist leaders of all time.¹¹ He rose to prominence during the mid-1880s and remained in positions of influence and power until about 1903 when he sided with John Harvey Kellogg in his administrative battle with the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹² At the 1888 General Conference Session, Jones, along with Ellet J. Waggoner,¹³ had placed a heavy emphasis upon the theme of righteousness by faith.¹⁴ However, this emphasis did not meet with general acceptance among the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁵ Nevertheless, in the early 1890s, Jones teamed up with Waggoner, W. W. Prescott and Ellen White in promoting the doctrine of righteousness by faith. In doing so Jones placed a great emphasis on the humanity of Christ.

¹¹Richard Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* Revised edition (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 616.

¹²Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 268-272.

¹³The next section looks at Waggoner.

¹⁴Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 178.

¹⁵George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), 61-65.

Jones did not refer to the human nature of Christ in his discourses at the 1888 General Conference Session. In tracing the historical development of his teaching on the subject, Jean Zurcher makes an interesting discovery. He points out that when Waggoner went to England in 1892 he sent the works of English clergyman Edward Irving to Jones. Irving taught a postlapsarian understanding of the humanity of Christ. Thus, Jones was exposed to Irving's writings which could have influenced his preaching at the 1895 GC Session.¹⁶ It was within this context that he wrote *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*¹⁷—his most definitive work on the human nature of Christ.

The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection

The writings of Alonzo T. Jones examine both the divine and human natures of Christ. However, Jones devotes more time to the humanity of Christ. Using the book of Hebrews as his biblical base, he discusses the divinity of Christ. In doing so he stresses the importance of seeing Christ in the image of God, meaning the very likeness of God.¹⁸ He then naturally flows into an exposition of Hebrews 2 and concentrates upon the humanity of Christ. For him, since in Hebrews chapter 1 Christ is portrayed as having the image of God—and that means the same likeness as God—then when Hebrews chapter 2 portrays Christ in the image of humanity that means He was completely human. Thus, Christ's very substance was the same as every other human being. Jones argues that if Christ is not in very substance fully human in Hebrews chapter 2, then Hebrews chapter

¹⁶Jean Zurcher, *Touched with Our Feelings* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1999), 82.

¹⁷Alonzo T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905). Because of the nature of this work I examine it first and by itself.

¹⁸Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 12-14.

1, which talks about Him in the likeness of God, does not make any sense.¹⁹ Furthermore, he adduces the claim that Christ is of the same likeness to God “in *substance* as well as in form.” In like manner He is like humanity “in *substance* as well as in form.”²⁰

For him, Jesus, the last Adam, came “in the same place, in the same condition” as the first Adam after the fall.²¹ For Jones, Christ’s likeness to humanity is exactly the same as other human beings in “*all things*—.” Therefore, Christ’s likeness to humanity is as humans are in a “fallen, sinful nature” and not as Adam was before the fall. Thus, as humans have become, since they became subject to death, so, too, was Jesus in the incarnation.²²

Using logic, Jones pushes his argument a bit further. Since Jesus came to die in order to bring about human redemption, two things must be important: first, He must be subject to death—and death is a reality in human existence only because of the existence of sin. Second, in order for Jesus to reach humankind at its level, He must of necessity come in the same condition as the rest of the human family.²³ From Jones’s perspective the only way wherein Jesus could have identified with humanity in its sufferings and save them from sin was by being subject to suffering as well. He then goes on to say that the

¹⁹Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 15.

²⁰Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 17, emphases in the original.

²¹Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 16.

²²Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 18, emphases in the original.

²³Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 18.

sufferings of which Jesus partook are the wages of sin.²⁴ Furthermore, in his understanding Jesus “took part of the same flesh and blood as we have in the bondage of sin and the fear of death, in order that He might deliver us from the bondage of sin and the fear of death.”²⁵

Concerning Jesus’ temptations, Jones posits the view that He felt the same way the rest of humanity feels when tempted. Furthermore, Jesus was also weak as other human beings are and could of His own do nothing. Nevertheless, when tempted, even though He felt the same way other human beings feel, through His faith—“His divine *faith*”—He gained victory over temptation.²⁶ The reality of His temptations, as well as His manner of dealing with them is important since Christ could not be separated by a single degree from those He came to save.²⁷ Therefore, it was important for Him to be

²⁴Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 19. This argument seems to be somewhat weaker than Jones would have seen it. Jones’s argument tends to circumscribe Jesus’ ability to save and make it impossible for salvation from Christ to be available without Him having a sinful human nature.

²⁵Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 19. Once again some subtle definitions can make a significant difference in this argument and thereby create theological problems. When Jones speaks of Jesus taking part in “the bondage of sin” does he mean that He, Jesus, was *in* bondage to sin? Was He held in bondage to sin? If the answer is yes, then how could He save humanity from the condition within which it was because of sin? If no, then how could He take part in the bondage of sin and not be *in* bondage to sin?

²⁶Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 21.

²⁷Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 27. Jones makes what appears to be a somewhat theologically problematic statement. It seems that in order for Christ not to be separate by a single degree from those He came to save He must have participated in the *same nature* as well as the *same actions* as other human beings. However, as Jones so lucidly points out, when Jesus was tempted He gained the victory over temptation—thus never succumbing to temptation and sinning. Human action, on the other hand, is not so. All humans sin, Romans 3:23. Thus Jesus is different from all other humans in terms of actions, since He never sinned. Consequently, it seems that he is separate from the rest of humanity by at least a single degree. If, on the other hand, what he has in mind is limited to Christ’s inherited humanity, then it is possible that during the incarnation He inherited an imperfect human nature. However, it should be noted that the nature of the topic—the nature of Christ—naturally lends itself to subtle variations and constant debate.

just like the rest of the human family in the incarnation. In that light Jones posits his exposition of Galatians 4:4.

For him the phrase “made under the law” means Jesus was under the law. And what does it mean to be under the law? For Jones it means “to be guilty, condemned, and subject to the curse.”²⁸ He then goes on to add that Jesus was made in the same state of guilt, condemnation and curse as any other human being. At the same time, in order to avoid theological problems, he quickly adds a caveat and points out that Jesus was “*made*” guilty, condemned and a curse, but none of these was His by “native fault.” He was thus for the purpose of redeeming the human race.²⁹ Resultantly, even though Jesus was made guilty, condemned and a curse, He was able to live without sinning. Furthermore, each human being who feels the guilt of sin, condemnation and the curse knows how close Jesus came in order to identify with fallen human beings.³⁰ Identity between Jesus and the rest of humanity is important to Jones due to his soteriological destination.

For him, it is not enough for Christ to deliver the human race from sin—He must also save them from committing further sins. In order for that to be done there must be deliverance from the “*liability to sin*” which belongs to the human family as a result of heredity.³¹ Since Jesus was able to conquer, in the flesh, the liability to sin, likewise,

²⁸Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 22. The logical, as well as theological question is this: of what was Jesus guilty? Was He guilty of sin? And if He was indeed guilty of sin, then how could He save those who are guilty of sin.

²⁹Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 23. Jones appears to be placing a considerable amount of the weight of humanity’s salvation upon the shoulders of semantics.

³⁰Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 24.

³¹Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 32. Emphasis in the original.

those who are in Him can also conquer the liability to sin. Thus, just as Christ, with a sinful nature, lived a conqueror, so too can every human being who depends upon Him.³² The believer's victory is assured because of Jesus' victory. To give his teaching further strength, Jones incorporates an additional concept into his teaching on the humanity of Christ.

Jones makes a connection among his Christology, soteriology and the sanctuary services. In his estimation, the focus of the sanctuary service is the perfection of the believer. Christ, the Heavenly High Priest, through His victorious holy living has opened to the human family a consecrated way to holiness—perfection of character. By coming in the flesh and identifying with fallen humanity, He has “consecrated a way from where we are to where He now is, at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens in the holiest of all.” Because Christ experienced temptation and identified with each soul in his/her state, He has now made it possible for them to go “through all the vicissitudes and experiences of a whole lifetime, and even through death and the tomb, into the holiest of all, at the right hand of God forevermore.”³³ Jones then concludes that the goal of the Christian is perfection of character. And since Christ attained it in sinful human flesh, He has made a consecrated way for all believers to attain perfection. This way is found in Christ.³⁴ Jones provides further amplification of his points during the 1893 and 1895 General Conference Sessions in particular as well as in church publications.

³²Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 33.

³³Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 61.

³⁴Jones, *Consecrated Way*, 62.

The 1893 and 1895 General Conference Sessions

These General Conference³⁵ sessions hold special significance since at both of them Jones was the principal devotional speaker. Speaking at the 1893 General Conference Session, Jones posited the understanding that Jesus came in the same flesh we have and stood in the same place where we stand;³⁶ thus in His humanity Christ had our flesh,³⁷ and in this flesh He wove on earth His righteousness.³⁸ At the 1895 General Conference Session he made some of his more forceful statements as regards the human nature of Christ.

For him, Christ took the same flesh as the rest of humanity since that is the only kind of flesh there is.³⁹ On His human side, Christ's nature is "precisely our nature."⁴⁰ In that regard, Jones sees the word "likeness," as used in Romans 8:3, to mean image or likeness of nature.⁴¹ By taking the seed of Abraham, Jesus actually took the nature of Abraham.⁴² Furthermore, since Jesus was made "in all things" "like His brethren," Jones believed "there is not a particle of difference between" Him and the rest of humanity.⁴³

³⁵The term General Conference refers to the highest level of organization within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

³⁶1893 *General Conference Bulletin*, 412.

³⁷1893 *General Conference Bulletin*, 301

³⁸1893 *General Conference Bulletin*, 297.

³⁹1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, 232.

⁴⁰1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, 231.

⁴¹1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, 232.

⁴²1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, 233.

⁴³1895 *GCB*, 233. It was on this point that some of the delegates at the 1895 GC Session confronted Jones with a statement from Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 2:202, which speaks of

Jones sees a close relationship between the humanity of Christ and temptation. For him, the only way Jesus could have been tempted in the same way as the rest of humanity was for Him to be in the same state as they are in all things. Thus “Jesus had to take all the feelings and the nature of *myself*, of *yourself*, and *the other man* also, so that he could be tempted in all points like as I am, and in all points like as you are, and in all points like the other man is.”⁴⁴ Therefore, there is a difference between Christ and Adam immediately after the fall.

For Jones, Christ the Second Adam, came into the world in a worse condition than Adam at the time of the fall since the human race had experienced 4,000 years of degeneracy. Thus, Christ stood in a “condition of weakness and dishonor” such as the rest of the human family at His time.⁴⁵

Therefore, Jones’ conceptualization of the humanity of Christ places Him on the same plane as the rest of humanity. At times he uses strong language in order to emphasize his point—and it is debatable whether or not he was overstating his point. The key point for him is a Christ who closely identifies with the rest of humanity thereby providing believers with the assurance of victorious living, while at the same time the assurance of empathy for those struggling with sin. Just as Christ was able to live victoriously by depending upon the Father, so too can each believer. And because of

Christ as “a brother in our infirmities, but not possessing like passions.” The following day in his sermon he made a distinction between Christ having sinful flesh and Christ having a sinful mind. See *1895 GCB*, 312, 327.

⁴⁴*1895 General Conference Bulletin*, 234. (Emphases in the original.)

⁴⁵Alonzo. T. Jones, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (February 18, 1896) 105.

Christ's victorious living, a consecrated way to Christian perfection⁴⁶ has been made available to all believers. Thus, there is a close connection between Jones's Christology and his soteriology. Is this connection found in the writings of his close associate Ellet J. Waggoner as well?

Ellet J. Waggoner

Within the context of Seventh-day Adventism, the names Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner are usually linked together. It is a link which began in California at the Pacific Press, working with the *Signs of the Times* magazine, and continued at the 1888 General Conference Session where together they championed the cause of righteousness by faith.⁴⁷ It is within the context of the same 1888 General Conference Session that Waggoner introduces the humanity of Christ into his soteriology.

George I. Butler, General Conference President, wrote a little book titled *The Law in the Book of Galatians* just before the 1886 General Conference Session. Commenting on Galatians 4:4, Butler posited the view that the phrase "made under the law" means Christ was not born under the condemnation of the law but under its authority—obligation to keep the law.⁴⁸ Waggoner, however, rejects this view. For him, the phrase "made under the law" in Scripture consistently means under the law's condemnation. Thus, in this instance it means the same thing. Furthermore, he asserts that the phrase

⁴⁶As we shall see later in this work, there are differences in the way Adventist authors tend to view Christian perfection. However, two general categories may suffice to cover the main differences—act-based and faith-based. We shall also notice a close connection between Christology and Christian perfection. See also, "Preliminary Note on Theological Terms," at the beginning of chapter 2.

⁴⁷Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 172-178.

⁴⁸George I. Butler, *The Law in the Book of Galatians* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1886), 58.

means “condemned by the law” and not anything else.⁴⁹ It is from this premise that he predicates his understanding of Jesus’ human nature.

Because Christ took human nature, He was subject to death—the purpose of the incarnation. From His birth He was in the same condition as those He came to save.⁵⁰ Since His death was essential for the redemption of humankind, He could not have taken a sinless human nature since only sinful human nature could experience death. In that regard there is a contrast between Adam’s nature and Christ’s nature. Adam was made “perfect flesh” but Christ was made “fallen flesh.” Christ went all the way to the bottom and became “sinful flesh.”⁵¹ In taking human nature Jesus assumed all the sinful tendencies and weaknesses which every other human being possesses.⁵² Therefore, Christ was “made under the law,” Galatians 4:4 and in that regard He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” Romans 8:3.⁵³ Christ was “made like unto His brethren,” (Hebrews 2:16, 17). He was made with sinful flesh—a sinful nature. Human beings can take great comfort in the humanity of Christ—since it was precisely the same as theirs. Nevertheless, having a sinful human nature by no means implicates Christ in sin.⁵⁴

By taking a sinful human nature—for the purpose of making salvation available to lost humanity—Christ does not lose any value. On the contrary, His “Divine power” is

⁴⁹Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* (Oakland, CA: n.p, 1888), 58-59.

⁵⁰Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, 60.

⁵¹1897 *General Conference Bulletin*, 57.

⁵²E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Glad Tidings, 1999; Originally Published Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 31.

⁵³Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, 60.

⁵⁴Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, 61.

exalted since He came to the level of sinful humanity in order that He may raise them to His level of “spotless purity”—the level of purity He kept though carrying a sinful human nature.⁵⁵ And, due to the fact that He had a sinful human nature, throughout His life He experienced a struggle between the flesh and the Divine nature. At no time, though, did His Divine power fail Him. At the end He had endured all that the rest of the human family has to endure yet still He was able to return to the Father in the same level of purity which He had when He left heaven.⁵⁶ Christ’s pure and victorious living in sinful flesh has profound implications for the believer.

When He took human weaknesses upon Himself Christ made it possible for those who accept Him to become new creatures.⁵⁷ Preaching at the 1891 General Conference Session, Waggoner makes use of a personal example to highlight the availability of power to be new creatures—creatures who live like overcomers. Waggoner speaks about struggling with certain weaknesses and not overcoming them. In an effort to deal with them, he decided to view them as heredity,⁵⁸ however his conscience was still not placated. This is due to the fact that Christ has not left any excuse for sin. In that light, since Christ condemned sin in the flesh, He takes away our sinful nature thereby enabling us to find deliverance from sin. Thus, Christ’s condemnation of sin in the flesh gives each

⁵⁵Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 32, 33.

⁵⁶Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 34. Waggoner mentions the Divine power in Christ not wavering or harboring any evil desire for one moment. However, he does not mention specifically that the human nature did such. However, within the context of his statement one can get the impression that he had this in mind when he spoke about the human nature and the struggle with which Christ was faced.

⁵⁷1897 *General Conference Bulletin*, 89.

⁵⁸Waggoner writes that human beings can no longer argue that they sin because of heredity, because, even though Christ had the same human nature as the rest of the human family, He did not sin. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, 61.

believer the assurance of victory.⁵⁹ Through Christ's victorious life in sinful human nature, Christ was able to accomplish that which heretofore was not possible.

Expositing upon Romans 8 he makes the point that the law could not justify because there was a problem with the material with which it had to work. Thus, because the material was weak it could not bring justification. Therefore, the problem was not with the law but the material with which it had to work.⁶⁰ He then goes on to state that Christ came for the purpose of doing that which the law could not do—condemn sin in the flesh. He accomplished this through keeping the law even though He was in the likeness of sinful flesh.⁶¹

Waggoner adds a curiously interesting notion to the idea of sinful versus sinless flesh. For him “the idea of sinless flesh [in] mankind is the deification of the devil,

⁵⁹1891 *General Conference Bulletin*, 187. This position poses a natural question: When a believer sins after conversion is that due to a reassertion of the sinful nature? Furthermore, what is the status, regarding salvation, of the believer who commits sin after conversion?

⁶⁰It is interesting to note that Waggoner states that “evil is a part of man's very nature, being inherited by each individual from a long line of sinful ancestors” and as a result “whatever righteousness springs from him must be only like ‘filthy rags’—compared with the spotless robe of the righteousness of God.” See Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 62. This position seems to present a challenge to his earlier postulation regarding Jesus' human nature. If Christ had the exact same human nature as every other human being then it naturally follows that His human nature was also evil and incapable of producing anything but filthy rags. However, he maintains that Christ was able to produce spotless righteousness. In *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, he presents somewhat of an explanation to this somewhat contradictory line of argument. Arguing against Butler's assertions in his work *The Law in the Book of Galatians*, he claims that since Butler argued that Jesus was under the condemnation of the law while He was on the cross and still remained sinless, it is logically possible for Him to be under the condemnation of the law at other times of His life and be sinless. Thus, even though He took sinful human nature He was still sinless. See Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, 62. However, it should be noted that he wrote *Christ and His Righteousness* after writing *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*.

⁶¹1891 *General Conference Bulletin*, 187.

because sinlessness belongs only to God, but sin is of the devil.” To speak of sinless flesh would be to combine the lusts of the flesh with the workings of the Spirit.⁶²

Section Summary

Ellet J. Waggoner introduced the connection between the humanity of Christ and soteriology at the 1888 General Conference Session. By the mid-1890s both Waggoner and Jones had incorporated postlapsarian Christology into their soteriology. Jones added two other elements to his postlapsarian postulations—the sanctuary doctrine and eschatology. Jones presents Christ as living a sinless life in a sinful nature. Through living this life Christ created for the rest of the human family the path to Christian perfection. Since Jesus created a path to sinless living every believer can experience the same victory of Christ even though they are born with sinful natures.

For his part, Waggoner did not place the same level of emphasis as did Jones on the connection among Christ’s human nature, soteriology, the sanctuary doctrine and eschatology. Rather, he basically limited the discussion to the connection between the

⁶²1901 *General Conference Bulletin*, 405. It may appear that Waggoner was vastly overstating his point—to such an extent that he was making an unbiblical argument. If it is that “sinless” and “the flesh” cannot go together, then before the Fall Adam and Eve were either not sinless or were not physically flesh. If the point has to do with nature and not physical flesh, the same still applies. Indeed, there is a distinction between being in the flesh and in the Spirit, Romans 8:4-10. At the same time, even though this distinction holds, it did not apply to Adam and Eve. Thus, Adam and Eve, before the Fall, were sinless, in terms of nature, and at the same time were in bodies of flesh. Therefore, they were sinless while having bodies of flesh. And even if the argument should be limited to the nature of humanity, before the Fall Adam and Eve were sinless human beings. Furthermore, the New Testament uses the word “flesh” to mean sinful nature, Romans 8:8, 9. Simultaneously it uses the word “flesh” as a mere reference to the physical body, as in Luke 24:39. This latter usage highlights Jesus’ existence in a physical body, “flesh and bones,” after His resurrection. And unless Waggoner wants to assign sinful flesh to Jesus’s post-resurrection body, then He, Jesus, was sinless while at the same time human. Thus, sinless flesh and humankind can go together without deifying the devil. Before the Fall human beings were sinless in terms of nature and yet flesh in terms of their physical bodies. After the Second Coming things will return to the way they were before the Fall, thus once again human beings will be sinless in nature while having bodies of flesh. One is inclined to think, though, that at this time in Waggoner’s experience (1901) his theology had become so muddled that at times he made points that even his most loyal adherents would not be willing to follow.

humanity of Christ and soteriology. In that regard, similar to Jones, Waggoner sees great importance in Christ having a sinful human nature since, with such a nature He can more closely identify with sinful humanity, thereby giving great encouragement to every believer. Just as Jesus was able to live a sinless life in a sinful nature so, too, can every believer. Thus, by coming in sinful flesh He provides encouragement to all believers. Through His victorious life Christ condemned sin in the flesh thus eliminating any excuse the believer may make for sinning. As Seventh-day Adventism moved into the next few decades of the 20th century new theologians emerge to provide new insights on the human nature of Christ.

Developments from the 1930s to the 1970s

The period from the 1930s to the 1970s presented some extremely significant developments within Adventist Christology. Milian L. Andreasen became one of the most impactful voices within Adventism on the subject of the human nature of Christ. Andreasen's theology, especially his Final Generation theology, looms large within Adventism, and his understanding of the humanity of Christ lies central in this theology. At the end of the period under examination, Edward Heppenstall presented a counter position to Andreasen's Christology. Since Andreasen precedes Heppenstall, we examine his Christology first.

M. L. Andreasen

Milian Lauritz Andreasen is certainly one of the most influential Adventist theologians of all time. His theology, according to George Knight, "is so central to modern Adventist development that a person is forced to respond in one way or another

to it.”⁶³ Knight identifies Andreasen as the link between the Waggoner, Jones, and Prescott understanding of the nature of Christ and later groups arising within Adventism in reaction to the book *Questions on Doctrine*.⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, Andreasen did not write much upon the topic of the human nature of Christ during his halcyon days as an Adventist theologian. The basic reason for his lack of literary production on the issue is the fact that the position he held was widely held within Adventism and thus was an *a priori* in his theological positions including the close connection among his soteriology, Christology and eschatology.

Andreasen on Sin

Andreasen’s soteriology⁶⁵ places a considerable emphasis upon sanctification. However, to understand his soteriology one has to know his anthropology. As regards his anthropology, his doctrine of sin has to be examined.

In his 1948 work, *The Book of Hebrews*, Andreasen posits his definition of sin. For him, 1 John 3:4 provides the biblical definition of sin. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” This definition could seem to indicate that he saw sin only as an action. However, he then points out that “the law is spiritual” and “not only deals with outward acts but reaches the motives and intents of the heart.”⁶⁶ Thus he recognized sin both as an action

⁶³Knight, *Search for Identity*, 144.

⁶⁴Knight, *Search for Identity*, 145, 146.

⁶⁵This work concentrates more upon Andreasen’s soteriology as per sanctification than justification.

⁶⁶Milian Lauritz Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald, 1948), 461.

and an intention.⁶⁷ In discussing the final generation in his 1947 edition of *The Sanctuary Service*, Andreasen identified sin as leaving a person in “a deplorable condition—weak, despondent, [and] disheartened.” Added to that, because of sin, a person has “little control” of their mind or will. And, despite the best intentions, the sinner is incapable of doing what they know to be right.⁶⁸

Andreasen did understand sin as being more than overt actions. Commenting on Jesus’s attitude towards sin, Andreasen highlighted three pertinent points. First, he observes in Jesus’s attitude towards sin, that Jesus does not just focus on the outward ugly sins. For Andreasen, Jesus placed greater emphasis upon the sins that are “quite respectable.” Second, Andreasen also drew attention to Jesus’ emphasis upon the motives for sinful actions. Third, Andreasen observed that Jesus was quite aware of the “fountain” from which “evil things proceed.”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, human beings were not always in this state. There was a time when things were different.

⁶⁷See, Milian Lauritz Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald, 1948), 461.

⁶⁸Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 300. Although in this statement Andreasen appears to be placing a focus upon sin as a state, the general tenor of the paragraph, especially the way it ends, seems to be leading in the direction of emphasizing the *act* of sin more than the *state* of sin. For that reason, here is the complete paragraph. “Sin, like some diseases, leaves man in a deplorable condition—weak, despondent, disheartened. He has little control of his mind, his will fails him, and with the best of intentions he is unable to do what he knows to be right. He feels that there is no hope. He knows that he has himself to blame, and remorse fills his soul. To his bodily ailments is added the torture of conscience. He knows that he has sinned and is to blame. Will no one take pity on him?” Andreasen, *Sanctuary Service*, 300. Paul Evans quotes the statement above, among others, as evidence that Andreasen saw sin as a state. Paul Evans, “A Historical Contextual Analysis of the Final Generation Theology of M. L. Andreasen” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2010), 224-229.

⁶⁹Andreasen, *The Faith of Jesus*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1949), 97, 98. Andreasen, appears to show no distinction between *acts* and *intents* of sin. This view is consistent with Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. See Matthew 5:21-30.

In looking at humans as originally created, Andreasen considers them as having a tendency toward that which is right. At the same time, they did not have perfection of character since character perfection comes as a result of development—and development comes through testing.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Adam fell even though he was not faced with the severest test.⁷¹ As a result, humans, because of the defilement of sin, are weaker than Adam was. Thus, they need power to live new lives. He sees justice and fairness as both having a part to play in the plan of redemption. Justice demands that the offender be punished for offence committed. At the same time, fairness “demands that one who is born in sin [for] which he is in no way responsible, shall have his disabilities removed.”⁷² He also sees the salvation of the believer as being dependent upon standing the tests of loyalty to God.⁷³ Interestingly enough, he posits a dichotomy between “salvation *from* sin” and “forgiveness *of* sin” (emphases in the original). For him salvation involves

⁷⁰Milian Lauritz Andreasen, *Man—Here and Hereafter: Whence Came We and Wither do We Go?* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1937), 23.

⁷¹Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 311.

⁷²Andreasen, “The Covenants” (Unpublished Paper, Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research, n.d.), 9.

⁷³Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 298. His concept of sanctification tends to place a heavy emphasis upon humanity. It also seems to suggest that salvation is not made immediately effective when one accepts Christ as Savior; rather, it seems to say that one is only saved after the “tests” are all overcome. The positive side to this line of thought is the emphasis upon living victoriously; the negative side of it is its emphasis upon the source of victorious living. Granted, Christians are called to live victoriously, however, it is only within the context of being in Christ that one has victory. Christ does not teach the believer the rudiments of victory – He is their victory. Notwithstanding, life in Christ includes growth in grace. Indeed, even Jesus seems to allude to this in Matthew 11:28-30 where He admonishes His followers to “learn” of Him.

“complete victory” over sin. He defines sanctification as “separation from sin and...deliverance from its power and victory over it.”⁷⁴

For Andreasen, the “Covenant of Grace” is the avenue whereby humans are prepared for God’s inspection. He sees it as having two parts: “forgiveness of sin” and “strength for the doing of the will of God.” He is more concerned with the second aspect since it is here that power is acquired to perform the works of one who has been changed. In this second phase, sinners are being changed into saints, and, in order that they may become saints they will have to endure testing. Since human beings have been weakened as a result of the fall they will need to have more power available to them. The tests that come the way of the believer are meant to strengthen him/her and as each test is overcome others follow. These tests are progressively more difficult but by gaining each victory the believer is progressively strengthened. Finally, the believer reaches the stage where death will be chosen over sin; such a believer has reached a stage whereby all preparation for the kingdom of God is complete. Therefore, through the believer, “Satan is defeated, and God stands vindicated. A soul is saved.”⁷⁵

Andreasen on Sanctification

Andreasen had an atomized concept of sanctification: if someone had a long-standing weakness but has overcome it, then “on that point” that person is “sanctified.”

⁷⁴Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 300. Earlier in the same work he talks about “provisional forgiveness” in that it is only at the end of one’s life is God’s forgiveness of sin complete since an individual may be forgiven and then turn back into sin. If that is done then there is no blotting out of that person’s sins which may have been forgiven previously. Sins are not blotted out initially because individuals may “repent of their repentance.” That concept seems to strip all assurance of forgiveness away from penitent sinners. See, Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 176, 177.

⁷⁵Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 295-297.

As time goes by and the individual gains victory over other besetting sins, he/she becomes more and more sanctified until complete victory is won. To such a person “Satan has no more temptations” since “he has overcome them all.” Therefore, that person stands “ready for translation.” Christ, in turn will place “His seal upon him. He is safe, and he is sound. God has finished His work in him. The demonstration of what God can do with humanity is complete.”⁷⁶ With that in mind, he considers Jesus an example to humanity of victorious sanctified living.

Christ Is an Example of Sanctified Living

For Andreasen, the phrase “purification of sin” (Hebrews 1:3) means “*to make an end of sins;*” that is, not only must sin be forgiven it must also be completely eradicated. While He was on earth Christ gave a demonstration of what humanity can do. Purification of sin, then, means sanctification in the believer’s life—a life under the complete control of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, Christ had no avenue of help which is not available to believers. Thus, just as He was able to triumph over every temptation sent by Satan, so too can the Christian believer. Within that context, the believer, just like Christ, will be able to reach a stage whereby Satan has no more temptations to throw after him/her.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 302. He uses the example of a disabled ship that has been towed into a port; it “is safe but not sound” and likens it to a person who has been forgiven but not yet sanctified. Restoration brings deliverance and “complete victory.” The world needs the demonstration of what God can do when individuals have received restoration from sin. A person who has been sanctified is considered as being “‘holy,’ completely sanctified, and restored to the image of God.” See, Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 301.

⁷⁷Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 54, emphasis in the original.

In Andreasen's view Christ fulfilled the covenant that was not fulfilled by Adam; consequent to Him fulfilling the covenant, He became the new "head of humanity," and God rightfully sees Him as being such. Christ also demonstrated that it was possible for human beings to keep the law and He works to bring humans back to a condition where they can do the same as He did. Christ also keeps on working on the sinner's behalf until full restoration is accomplished.⁷⁸ "Christ, in the body given Him, worked out God's will in every particular and showed how perfection might be attained. Having given a demonstration that the attainment of perfection is possible, He offers to sanctify those who will come to Him."⁷⁹ In Andreasen's theology it was imperative for Christ to have a postlapsarian human nature.

Christ Had a Sinful Human Nature

Andreasen argued on the basis of Hebrews 2:17 that to "be a merciful and faithful high priest," Christ was obligated to be "in all things ... made like unto His brethren."⁸⁰ Christ could not be "exempt" from the "passions" of humanity, because if He were

⁷⁸Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 278. One is left to wonder if Andreasen is saying that Christ ultimately brings sinners to a stage where they can live victoriously without Him. He reiterates the same point on p. 294. It appears that Andreasen is making Jesus a savior-coach. He first saves from sin, and then coaches humans so that they can live above sin without Him.

⁷⁹Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 421.

⁸⁰Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches* (Conway, MO: Gems of Truth, n.d.), 2, originally published (Baker, OR: Hudson Printing, 1959). Here Andreasen adds that "if Christ is to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, Paul says it behoves Him [Hebrews 2:17, King James Version] 'in all things' to be like His brethren. This is obligatory. It is a duty He owes and must not avoid. He cannot make reconciliation for men unless He takes His place with them and in all things becomes like them. It is not a question of choice. He should, He must, He ought to, He is under obligation to, He owes it. Unless He has to struggle with the same temptations that men do, He cannot sympathize with them. One who has never been hungry, who has never been weak and sick, who has never struggled with temptations, is unable fully to sympathize with those who are thus afflicted." *Letters to the Churches*, 2, 3. In much of this work Andreasen is responding to the Christology of the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.

exempt, He would not really be like every other human being. The book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, however, asserts that Christ was “*exempt* from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam.”⁸¹ In rebuttal, Andreasen quotes two statements from Ellen White, which he argues were misinterpreted by the authors of *QOD*:

Our Saviour identifies Himself with our needs and weaknesses, in that He became a suppliant, a nightly petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, to come forth invigorated and refreshed, braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. 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.⁸²

He was unsullied with corruption, a stranger to sin; yet He prayed, and that often with strong crying and tears. He prayed for His disciples and for Himself, thus identifying Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our failings, which are so common with humanity. He was a mighty petitioner, *not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures*, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points even as we are.⁸³

In Andreasen’s view, to agree with *QOD* that Christ was “exempt” from human passions would make Christ unlike other humans, contradicting his understanding of Hebrews 2:17. However, while he objects to the term “exempt,” he does so by taking issue with the *QOD* use of the term “passion,” quoting a dictionary to show that “passion” includes all the human emotions, even the agony and sufferings of Jesus during the crucifixion.”

The Ellen White quotations just cited, and their use in *QOD*, both refer to *negative* human passions. Andreasen’s response, however, refers to the *totality* of human passions. Thus Andreasen summarizes:

⁸¹*Questions on Doctrine*, 383, emphasis added; cf. *Questions on Doctrine*, 60.

⁸²White, *Testimonies*, 2:201-202, emphasis added; cited in *Questions on Doctrine*, 60.

⁸³White, *Testimonies*, 2:508-509, emphasis added; cited in *Questions on Doctrine*, 60.

Passion is an inclusive word. While originally it has reference to sorrow, suffering, agony, it is not confined to these meanings nor to passions of the flesh only, but includes all man's emotions ... anger, sorrow, hunger, pity; it includes, in fact all temptations that incite men to action. To take these emotions away from a man, to exempt him from all temptation, results in a creature less than a man, a kind of no-man, a shadow man.... Temptations are the character-building ingredients of life for good or ill, as man reacts to them."⁸⁴

For Andreasen, Christ was without any of the "pollution" that comes as a result of sin. For him, "passions" are sources of "temptation" and therefore one can have a "passion" or "temptation" and not be defiled. The law of heredity applies to passions, but not to pollution.⁸⁵ Christ was subject to the law of heredity because, were that not the case, then salvation would not have been possible.⁸⁶ To him, the notion that Christ was "exempted ... from the passions that corrupt men, is the acme of all heresy." Such a notion, in his estimation, "makes God a deceiver and Christ His accomplice."⁸⁷ However, according to Andreasen, through His own personal experience, Christ knows human weaknesses such as "sickness," "weakness," "temptation," "sorrow", "affliction", "pain," as well as the feeling of being forsaken by both God and humankind.⁸⁸

Andreasen seems to indicate that Christ's human body was somewhat superior to ours since, it had to be "capable of suffering to the utmost; otherwise He could never

⁸⁴Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches*, 5-6.

⁸⁵Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 55. This conception leads me to ask if Christ could have had impure thoughts and desires but since they were not cherished, they were not sin. The Bible is completely silent on this issue; and where the Bible is silent it is best to be silent. However, when one goes about trying to describe in the minutest detail that which has not been revealed there is a tendency toward speculative theology and that can be dangerous.

⁸⁶Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 54.

⁸⁷Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 6.

⁸⁸Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 3.

have survived either the temptation in the wilderness or the agony in Gethsemane, the suffering of which would ordinarily cause death.”⁸⁹ Andraesen also asserts that Christ’s “nature was sensitive to the least slight or disrespect or contempt” and as a result “His tests were harder and His temptations stronger than any we have to endure.”⁹⁰ Therefore, he seems to indicate at least two differences between Christ and the rest of humanity. But due to His personal experience of human weakness and temptations, Christ is able to be a sympathetic Savior.⁹¹ Therefore it is only through placing Himself on the same level as those He came to save is Christ able to demonstrate to them the manner of overcoming “infirmities and passions.”⁹² Furthermore, just as Christ demonstrated the manner of overcoming, at the end of time, there will be a group of believers who will also provide a definitive demonstration.

The Final Generation

For Andraesen, the final generation—the one that “bears the results of accumulated sins ... [and] suffer[s] from inherited tendencies” will demonstrate to the world, as well as to past generations, the fact that humans can live without sinning. Due to inherited tendencies this generation is the weakest generation. Its demonstration of victorious living proves that there is no excuse for breaking God’s law.⁹³ This generation

⁸⁹Andraesen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 423.

⁹⁰Andraesen, *Letters to the Churches*, 6.

⁹¹Andraesen, *Letters to the Churches*, 3.

⁹²Andraesen, *Letters to the Churches*, 6.

⁹³Andraesen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 311, 312.

will follow Jesus's example and display to the entire world that God can do in them the same as He did in Christ. Through this display, God "will have shown Himself true and Satan a liar. His government will stand vindicated."⁹⁴ Andreasen further argues that although Christ—by living in accordance with the law during His incarnation defeated Satan, Satan still persisted in believing that he could gain success with human beings where he failed with Jesus. If Satan can be victorious over humankind, he "might not be defeated."⁹⁵

For Andreasen God just needs to "produce *one* man who has kept the law" in order that He may win His case against Satan. He then goes on to say that the "outcome hinges on the production of one or more who keep the commandments of God." After making this statement he goes on to talk about the victorious lives lived by Job and some other unnamed individuals. Andreasen argues that Satan has a counter to these individuals—that being they did "not come under the ordinary rules." God uses the last generation since this special group will settle the issue and bring about the ultimate defeat of Satan.⁹⁶ He identifies the final generation with the 144,000 of Revelation, in doing so

⁹⁴Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 299.

⁹⁵Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 309, 310.

⁹⁶Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 316 (emphasis in the original). This postulation brings a certain level of discomfort for a number of reasons. First, Andreasen seems to be staking the salvation of humanity upon the wrong source; instead of Jesus it is the final generation that brings about salvation. This may not seem to be so on the surface. However, when one takes into consideration that he sees a dichotomy between salvation and forgiveness, with the former including complete victory, and since it is only this final generation that lives with complete victory, then it appears that they are the ones who guarantee salvation. Second, if God only needed "*one* man" to accomplish His task, and if Jesus did indeed accomplish this task, why the need for another group to do the same? It may seem as though what Jesus did was either insufficient or not in total harmony with what God wanted to accomplish. Third, Andreasen goes into speculative theology; by asserting that Satan has an argument against those who overcame outside of the "ordinary rules;" which are not identified. The Bible does not seem to have any evidence to support such an assertion. Fourth, he bases God's vindication upon human beings and not upon Himself. If God needs human beings in order for Him to vindicate Himself one may naturally wonder why. Why is it that

he combines the atonement and eschatology. Thus, he separates Christ's atoning work into three phases: the first phase was completed before the cross in that Christ's sinless life gives the pattern for believers. The second phase includes Calvary where He carried the sins of the world. The third phase is evidenced in what He does through the final generation.⁹⁷

The last generation is tested just as the Old Testament patriarch Job. The test they endure is not as great as that which was endured by Jesus.⁹⁸ The final generation is critical to determining the outcome of the conflict between God and Satan. Thus, God chooses them as the ones through whom He will portray his "supreme exhibition." This generation lives amidst the strongest attacks of the devil; yet still they are victorious. After the end of the time of probation they live without access to God, since the Spirit of God has been withdrawn from the earth. They are highly vulnerable and Satan basically has the leverage to do to them whatever he wishes, with the exception of taking their lives. Nevertheless, Satan fails therefore God seals them and through them He defeats Satan and His government is vindicated.⁹⁹ This line of argument has a not so subtle appeal to Adventist elitism and exclusivism and Andreasen's final generation theology

the Almighty has to depend upon weak, sinful human beings to vindicate His name? This notion seems to elevate human beings beyond what the Bible asserts. Finally, Andreasen's last generation theology seems to reduce God to a reactionary God. It appears as though Satan is planning and counter-planning and God is only reacting to what he, Satan does.

⁹⁷Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 58, 59. It is interesting to note that he basically omitted Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary from any of the phases of the atonement. By not doing so he fails to include something which is very integral to Seventh-day Adventist theology—namely Christ's intercession in the sanctuary. It must be mentioned, though, that he does connect the work in the heavenly sanctuary—the cleansing of the sanctuary—with the cleansing of the saints on earth. However, it seems that he placed a very high stress upon what is being done in the saints on earth.

⁹⁸Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 312. If Jesus' test was the greatest why is it that another group has to be tested in order to vindicate God?

⁹⁹Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 319.

became exceptionally attractive. However, the latter end of Andreasen’s career saw him strenuously opposing the positions taken by some Adventists on the humanity of Christ in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*. It is of acute importance to examine the positions given in that work.

The Human Nature of Christ in *Questions on Doctrine*¹⁰⁰

Seventh-day Adventist church historian George R. Knight begins his historical and theological introduction to the annotated edition of *QOD* with the following statement: “*Questions on Doctrine* easily qualifies as the most divisive book in Seventh-day Adventist history.” Its publication has resulted in “prolonged alienation and separation” in the Adventist community¹⁰¹ and what can be best considered as an enduring legacy of fractionizing and polarization. The main reason for such an unremarkable legacy was the work’s treatment of the human nature of Christ—the “most problematic issue” with which the Adventists leaders¹⁰² had to treat in responding to the questions posed by the conservative Protestants. The Adventists knew the position of the Evangelicals as per the human nature of Christ. Thus, should they present Christ with a sinful human nature the Evangelicals will equate such a position to mean Christ was in need of a savior as well. On the other hand, based upon a recent poll, a vast majority of

¹⁰⁰Hereinafter referred to as *QOD*. The very name of the book testifies of its nature. It was written in response to specific questions posed to a select group of Adventist leaders by certain Evangelical ministers. Except for some brief background already given in chapter 1, this dissertation does not go into the history of *QOD* and limits its examination of *QOD* to only the sections pertinent to the human nature of Christ.

¹⁰¹Knight, George R, editor. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: Annotated Edition* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), xiii.

¹⁰²Although *QOD* does not identify its authors, the principal contributors were LeRoy Edwin Froom, W. E. Read, and Roy Allan Anderson.

Adventist leaders believed Christ’s human nature was sinful just as every other human being.¹⁰³ In seeking to navigate between this Adventist Scylla and Charybdis the Adventist leaders effectively introduced a new position on the human nature of Christ within Adventism.

Christ Became One with Humanity During the Incarnation

The purpose for Him becoming one with humanity, from the perspective of the authors of *QOD*, was redemptive. As a human being He experienced hunger, thirst, and weariness. Christ knew what it is to need the sympathy of other human beings as well as the assistance of His heavenly Father. In His life He was truly “touched with the feelings of our human infirmities, yet He lived a life wholly free from sin.” He experienced the developmental stages of human growth. He also knew sorrow since He wept over Jerusalem as well as at the graveside of Lazarus. He experienced betrayal by one of His followers, was crucified, died and buried, rose from the grave and ascended to heaven and continues to watch over His children from heaven—all the while maintaining His humanity. Nevertheless, throughout His human existence on earth He was always free from any “taint” of human “sinful propensities and passions.”¹⁰⁴

Christ’s Human Nature Was Perfect and Sinless

That which is true of His divinity also applies to His humanity—sinlessness. For that reason, He challenged the Pharisees on the issue of conviction of sin (see John 8:46).

¹⁰³George R. Knight, *QOD: Annotated Edition*, xv.

The authors of *QOD* made use of the New Testament to reinforce their position on the human nature of Christ by quoting 1 Peter 2:22, “He ‘did no sin’”, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 “He “knew no sin’—.” Furthermore, Pilate, at the trial of Jesus, is also identified when he states he found ““no fault” in Jesus. Interestingly enough, there is a seamless movement from Jesus’ actions (“did no sin”) to His nature, since they argue that both Pilate and the apostles testify of the sinlessness of His human nature.¹⁰⁵

Moving from the Bible to the writings of Ellen White, *QOD* continues to press its claim for Jesus’ prelapsarian human nature. Thus, *Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901 is quoted. Here White wrote that Christ took ““the nature, but not the sinfulness of man.”” Additionally, *QOD* utilizes *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* vol. 5: 1131; ““We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ.”” In order to provide further clarification for the purpose for the incarnation, *QOD* references White in *Review and Herald*, June 15, 1905;¹⁰⁶ *Desire of Ages*, 296; and *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8: 286. These citations point to the purpose of the incarnation. Christ became human in order that He may have fellowship in human experience, redeem humanity from the degradation of sin, and reveal the Father.¹⁰⁷ And since the primary purpose for the incarnation was to redeem fallen humanity, when Christ

¹⁰⁴*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 50, 51.

¹⁰⁵*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 52. Whether they were aware of it or not, the authors of *QOD* certainly appear to confuse the issues by equating Jesus’ actions, sinless behavior, with His nature, sinless nature. It is hardly likely that Pilate, for example, was by any means interested in Jesus’ human nature. Thus, when He confessed that he found “no fault” in Jesus this was based upon his trial of Jesus. This does not in any way appear to be related to Jesus’ human nature. Furthermore, it is not even a summary statement of the whole of Jesus’ life performance. Pilate was simply stating his conclusion based upon his examination of Jesus regarding the accusation brought against Him.

¹⁰⁶See Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, June 15, 1905.

¹⁰⁷*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 52, 53.

died He took the sins of the world upon Himself.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly enough, *QOD* posits a rather curious notion regarding Jesus' human nature.

It posits the notion that Jesus not only bore human sin vicariously but He also took human nature "vicariously." From the standpoint of *QOD*, human "weaknesses, frailties, infirmities, failings" are things which are natural to us. However, when Christ took human nature such things were not natural to Him and "He bore them in His perfect, sinless nature . . . vicariously, just as vicariously He bore the iniquities of us all." For the authors of *QOD* this notion sheds light on Ellen White's statements concerning Christ having a "sinful, fallen, and deteriorated human nature."¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, since from their perspective Christ had a prelapsarian human nature, then He could not differ from Adam before the fall. Thus, they forcefully conclude that in the same manner as He was able to carry the sin of the world vicariously and not be tainted by it, He was able to bear human "diseases and frailties" vicariously and remain untainted by the "corrupting influences of sin."¹¹⁰ However, even though He was not tainted by sin's corrupting influences, was it possible for Him to sin?

While acknowledging diversity of opinions within Christianity on Christ's peccability, *QOD* accepts the views of Ellen White on this subject as its own. White

¹⁰⁸*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 54.

¹⁰⁹*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 56. It would appear, that the authors of *QOD*, in an effort to protect Ellen White from the charge of postlapsarianism, actually went outside of both the Bible and Ellen White's own writings. This is further illustrated in Appendix B of *QOD*. This appendix deals with the human nature of Christ and is basically a compilation of the writings of Ellen White on the subject. However, within this compilation the authors inserted subheadings. The most problematic of the sub-headings is subheading III, "Took Sinless Human Nature." The problem with this subheading is that it not only introduced a new understanding of the humanity of Christ within Adventism, but it also contradicts some of the statements Ellen White made on the topic. For a more detailed analysis of this particular subheading, see Knight's notes in *QOD: Annotated Edition*, 516-526.

states that Christ, in taking human nature, did so “*with the possibility of yielding to temptation.*”¹¹¹ Nevertheless, the authors of *QOD* do not confine themselves to the writings of Ellen White to support their position. They cite eminent Christian theologians such as Phillip Schaff, Alexander Bruce, and Karl Ullmann to reinforce their position.¹¹² On this point *QOD* did not introduce any new position into Adventist Christology. However, its prelapsarian position did not sit well within the church. As mentioned above, M. L. Andreasen strenuously opposed this position—arguing for the postlapsarian position. On the other hand, there was emerging a new generation of Adventist theologians, some of whom did not agree with either Andreasen’s postlapsarian position or *QOD*’s prelapsarian position. Foremost on this list was Edward Heppenstall.

Edward Heppenstall

Edward Heppenstall has had a profound impact upon Adventist theology. This impact was somewhat two-phased. The first phase came through his tenure as a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and the second came through his writing.¹¹³ He came to prominence in Adventist theological circles during the late 1950s, about the time the church published *QOD*,¹¹⁴ which led to renewed debate regarding the

¹¹⁰*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 58.

¹¹¹White, *Desire of Ages*, 117; quoted in *QOD: Annotated Edition*, 59 (emphasis is in *QOD*).

¹¹²*QOD: Annotated Edition*, 59.

¹¹³See George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 173.

¹¹⁴Juhyeok Nam provides extensive and in-depth treatment of the reactions to the publication of the book. See Juhyeok Nam, “Reactions to the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and Questions on Doctrine, 1955–1971” (Ph.D. thesis, Andrews University, 2005).

human nature of Christ. Consequently, Heppenstall initially entered the debate within the context of reacting to *QOD*.

Heppenstall considers Christ's humanity to be neither postlapsarian, as taught by Jones, Waggoner, and Andreasen, nor prelapsarian, as held by the authors of *QOD*. Explaining the terms of Romans 8:3—"in the likeness of sinful flesh"—Heppenstall notes the importance of the word "likeness." He notes that the text did not state "in sinful flesh," but rather "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He believes that Paul was very careful to use the expression that way since he wanted to avoid giving the meaning that Christ came with a sinful human nature. Thus, by coming in the "likeness of sinful flesh" Christ "assumed" flesh that was "affected" by sin.¹¹⁵ Christ came into this world subject to human deterioration. Through Mary, His humanity inherited bodily/physical weakness. Just like every other human being He was subject to aging.¹¹⁶

Heppenstall points out three New Testament uses of the term "flesh." First it means simply physical flesh. Second, the term "flesh" also refers to humankind in its weakened state. Third, "flesh" can mean "tied to sin." This third use is in reference to life lived apart from God. He goes on to say that the first two uses apply to Christ but the third one does not.¹¹⁷ Christ was physically human and His human constitution was weakened physically. Christ's flesh during the incarnation shared two things with postlapsarian Adam and one with prelapsarian Adam. Consequently, Christ's humanity was not exactly the same as all other human beings since the fall.

¹¹⁵Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 136, 137, emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁶Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 138.

¹¹⁷Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 138, 139.

For Heppenstall, the biblical testimony presents two spiritual consequences as a result of the fall. First, human beings are completely lacking in righteousness—Adam’s original righteousness is lost.¹¹⁸ Second, they are all condemned to death.¹¹⁹ Due to sin all human beings are born separated from God—born “self-centered.” On the natural level, they function “outside of a right relationship with God,” not in a state of “dependence on God.”¹²⁰ Their self-centeredness leads to living without God and being preoccupied with self.¹²¹ That it is why Christ could not have had a sinful nature *exactly* like that of other human beings. To be our Savior, He could not have been born with a self-centered nature. But what does Heppenstall understand sin to be?

Heppenstall on Sin

For Heppenstall, sin has two core aspects—the sinful act of the sinner and the sinful state which comes about from birth.¹²² Thus sin is not simply bad actions. Sin includes a state of mind and a bias/tendency toward sin.¹²³ In his understanding, the Bible clearly teaches that human beings, since the fall, are degenerate by nature and

¹¹⁸Edward Heppenstall, *Salvation Unlimited: Perspectives in Righteousness by Faith* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1974), 12.

¹¹⁹Heppenstall, *Salvation Unlimited*, 26.

¹²⁰Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 121.

¹²¹Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 121, 122.

¹²²Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 107. One of the challenges faced by some Adventist theologians is what appears to be an inadequate doctrine of sin. Thus, there seems to be a tendency to view sin from the perspective of an act against God or violation of His commandments. Indeed, sin includes actions but a full definition goes beyond the outward act. Accordingly, a more developed definition of sin will not limit it to outward actions, but will also include the inner dimensions of sin. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was obviously pointing to these same tendencies among the Jews of His day. For that reason, He told them about the thoughts and lusts of the heart.

¹²³Edward Heppenstall, *Is Perfection Possible?* (Oakland: Pacific Press, n.d.), 5.

“prone to sin.” It is a defect with which every human being comes into the world. Every human has a dual inheritance from Adam: a sinful nature and death—the inevitable result of sin.¹²⁴ The corollary of this state of sinfulness is human inability to have any natural righteousness which God deems acceptable. Furthermore, as human beings grow older, they become more steeped in their propensities to sin. Additionally, sin results in separation from God. This is its most nefarious effect.¹²⁵ And every human being, since the fall, is destined to separation from God because of original sin.

Heppenstall on Original Sin

Original sin is not a concept accepted by all Adventist theologians.¹²⁶ However, Heppenstall is comfortable with the concept—as long as it does not imply original guilt.¹²⁷ He connects original sin to the state of the human being. Therefore, every human being born into the world has “an inherited disposition to sin” and not being born guilty of sin. Original sin means every descendant of Adam is born separated from God. They are not punished for this state but at the same time it is a consequence of sin.¹²⁸ Due to the fact that the consequence of Adam’s sin was total, original sin is not limited to a person’s biology or physiology. It is not a genetic problem. Sin is a spiritual problem.¹²⁹

¹²⁴Heppenstall, *Is Perfection Possible?* 108.

¹²⁵Heppenstall, *Is Perfection Possible?* 109, 121.

¹²⁶Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short, as well as Colin Standish and Russell Standish strongly oppose the notion of original sin. The contributions of both of these duos are considered in a subsequent section.

¹²⁷See “Preliminary Note on Theological Terms” at the beginning of chapter 2.

¹²⁸Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 121.

¹²⁹Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 122.

At the same time original sin is most evident in human self-centeredness.¹³⁰ But, how does that relate to the humanity of Christ?

Heppenstall on the Human Nature of Christ

For Heppenstall, the nature of Christ is neither exactly as Adam before the fall nor as Adam and his descendants after the fall. Since Jesus had a human mother—a sinful mother—into what state was He born? Heppenstall, following through from his understanding of sin, posits that Jesus was not born in the same state as we are. For Heppenstall, since sin is spiritual and not biological/genetic, Jesus could have only received from Mary that which is genetically transmitted. Thus, He had a “weakened human physical constitution, the results of sin upon the body.”¹³¹ In that regard, Jesus’ human body was the same as that of Adam’s posterity. Heppenstall identifies six experiences that Jesus shared with the rest of humanity: “weariness,” “needing sleep,” “hunger,” “sympathy,” “temptation,” and “suffering.” (Scriptural references: John 4:6; Matthew 8:24; Matthew 4:2; John 11:33-35; Hebrews 4:15; and 1 Peter 1:10, 11).¹³²

Because He was really human, Jesus experienced real human development; He was subject to the ordinary laws of body and mind development.¹³³ He had to learn things like other human children. However, because His mind was sinless He had a greater

¹³⁰Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 122.

¹³¹Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 126. While I am aware of the possibility of theological hair-splitting, this assertion can have its detractors. Some may be willing to assign a biological dimension to sin. Others may disagree, choosing to see *sin itself* as distinct from *sin’s impact* on the human being.

¹³²Edward Heppenstall, “Syllabus for Bible Doctrines” La Sierra College (Unpublished, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI), 22.

¹³³Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 23.

mental capacity than human beings with sinful minds.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, He was always sinless. Heppenstall posits two possible reasons for Jesus' sinlessness: first Christ was sinless because He was born in a "right relation with God." Second, He was sinless because He voluntarily remained in constant harmony with the Father.¹³⁵

In terms of His consciousness and will, Heppenstall asserts that in the incarnation Christ only had one consciousness—a human consciousness. For him it would have been impossible for the human consciousness to overrule the divine and as such it would have done injustice to His full humanity. Consequently, He only had a human consciousness. Since Christ had only a human consciousness, it is logical for Him to have had only a human will as well. Heppenstall further argues that had Jesus possessed a divine will, the conflict in Gethsemane would not have been necessary.¹³⁶ Thus, Christ shared the same consciousness and will as the rest of the human family. Since Christ shared the same consciousness and will as the rest of the human family, did He also possess the same desires as they do?

For Heppenstall, the fullness of Jesus' humanity means He also had the same natural human desires as the rest of the human family. He points out that natural desires, such as "hunger, thirst and sexual desire" are not in and of themselves sinful. Such desires only become sinful when they are cherished "contrary to the will of God."¹³⁷

¹³⁴Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 92.

¹³⁵Edward Heppenstall, "Incarnation of Jesus Christ" (Unpublished Paper, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI), 10.

¹³⁶Heppenstall, "Incarnation of Jesus Christ," 87, 88, 97.

¹³⁷Heppenstall, "Incarnation of Jesus Christ," 132.

Because human beings have fallen natures, which include tendencies to sin, their fallen nature also infect their natural desires. Christ, on the other hand, had “no such inclination or bent to sin. There was no rupture whatsoever between Him and God the Father. He and the Father were totally one.”¹³⁸ Therefore, in terms of His desires, Christ was not exactly the same as postlapsarian humanity. A clue to this difference, in Heppenstall’s view, is found in His conception and birth.

In terms of birth, there is a marked difference between Christ and us. Whereas we have two human parents, Christ only had one. Had Jesus the same conception as the rest of the human family then there would not have been any difference between Him and us. However, He had a divine Father, which constitutes a decisive break between Him and us. Therefore, unlike the rest of the human family, He never had the need to be born again.¹³⁹ Heppenstall asserts that every human being has “an ineradicable tendency to sin” and as long as one is born by natural means it is impossible to escape from this taint. Nevertheless, this does not apply to Jesus. If Jesus had only a (postfall) human nature it would have been impossible for Him to be without sin. However, He had a dual nature—human and divine.¹⁴⁰

Heppenstall also highlights the difference between Christ’s conception and ours. “Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit. We are not.” Additionally, from the start of His life Christ never had the tendency to live independently from God. Throughout His life there always remained the tendency to be in complete harmony with the Father. Thus,

¹³⁸Heppenstall, “Incarnation of Jesus Christ,” 132, 133.

¹³⁹Heppenstall, “Incarnation of Jesus Christ,” 135.

¹⁴⁰Heppenstall, “Syllabus for Bible Doctrines,” 23.

self-centeredness, the inheritance of the children of Adam, was never present within Christ. He then adds that throughout His life Christ denied Himself in behalf of lost sinners—this is the “supreme revelation of God to man.”¹⁴¹ Therefore, he claims that no one has any biblical authority to state Christ was born in the same sinful state as the rest of humanity.¹⁴² The question, therefore, is this: Was there any difference between Jesus’ temptations and our temptations?

As Adam, before the fall, was subject to temptation so too was Jesus. Jesus had “the keenest susceptibility to all forms of desire. To these desires, temptation may appeal.”¹⁴³ He further notes that Christ was aware that the only means whereby He could meet the temptations of Satan was through dependence upon the Father.¹⁴⁴ Thus, Christ’s victory came not from Himself but from the Father. Comparing Christ’s temptations with those of other human beings, Heppenstall identifies three distinct differences between the temptations of Christ and those of the rest of humanity: First, His perfect sinlessness; this fact would have made the temptation to use His own divine power to resist evil, even more difficult for Him. Second, due to His dual nature there would have been in His temptations some “appeals which are impossible to men.” Third, He was tempted because of His role as Redeemer. No other human being either received such temptation or is capable of coping with such temptations.¹⁴⁵ Most important, however, was Christ’s

¹⁴¹Heppenstall, “Syllabus for Bible Doctrines,” 127.

¹⁴²Heppenstall, “Syllabus for Bible Doctrines,” 129.

¹⁴³Heppenstall, “Syllabus for Bible Doctrines,” 23.

¹⁴⁴Heppenstall, “Incarnation of Jesus Christ,” 37.

¹⁴⁵Heppenstall, “Incarnation of Jesus Christ,” 37. Heppenstall’s three points are crucial. No matter how extreme human temptations may be, no one, other than Christ, was ever tempted in those three areas.

victory over temptations. The question is, was Christ tempted internally as well as externally?

In Heppenstall's estimation, temptation comes via two avenues: internal and external. Christ, in his understanding, "had no lust for evil by which He could be enticed into sin." In other words, Christ did not have any temptations from within. All other human beings experience such temptations. At the same time, temptations also come from the outside, via Satan, and Christ certainly faced such temptations.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, through dependence upon the Father¹⁴⁷ Christ lived victoriously over sin and in the process, has shown Satan's accusation—that the law of God is unjust and human beings are incapable of obeying it—to be a lie.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, Jesus' victory not only brings hope for the believer, but it also provides the believer with an example of victorious living. Even though the life of Christ is a perfect pattern, Christian believers can only copy that pattern when, by faith, they are in union with God.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, copying the pattern

Consequently, the temptations of Christ and His reactions to them appear to highlight at least one difference between Him and the rest of the human family.

¹⁴⁶Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God*, 151, 152. The concept of internal and external temptations, especially internal temptations, poses a bit of a problem. For Heppenstall, Christ had "no lust for evil." He predicates Christ's exemption from internal temptations upon this premise. However, this does not appear to address the issue of bodily temptations stemming from the inside. Bodily desires such as sexual desire, hunger, and thirst are natural, yet they emanate from the inside and can be a source of temptations. Thus, it is challenging to provide a precise definition for the exact nature of internal temptations.

¹⁴⁷Heppenstall, "Syllabus for Bible Doctrines," 23, 24. Heppenstall even quotes Ellen White's article from *RH*, September 29, 1891 to bolster his point. He further notes that the only means whereby Christ could meet the temptations of Satan was through dependence upon the Father. (See "Incarnation of Jesus Christ," 49). This is to be contrasted with what he says about sinners in *Salvation Unlimited*, 121. Here he posits the view that human beings at the natural level are in a state of independence from God. However, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit therefore He had no need to be born again since His natural birth was a direct result of the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He was never in the state of independence from God.

¹⁴⁸Heppenstall, "Incarnation of Jesus Christ," 49.

¹⁴⁹Heppenstall, "Incarnation of Jesus Christ," 46.

neither elevates the believer to the same level as Christ nor brings Christ down to the level of the believer.

In that context, Heppenstall decries the tendency to reduce Christ to the level of other human beings with a sinful nature. He attaches this tendency to a desire to imitate Christ and become perfect in the same sense that He was.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, in his estimation, Christ did not have a sinful human nature.¹⁵¹ For him, if one believes Christ had a sinful nature, that belief “implies that He was little more than a good man: the highest type that we, in ourselves, may become. [Thus], Christ’s gift of righteousness is either lost sight of or repudiated.”¹⁵² Furthermore, had Christ possessed a sinful nature, then He would not have been able to offer a perfect sacrifice. A sinful nature would have reduced Him to the same condition as the priests in the Levitical system who needed to offer sacrifices for themselves and then for the people.¹⁵³ Consequently, not only did Christ not possess a sinful nature, Christian believers will always possess one in this life. Thus, Heppenstall decries the tendency among some who promote eradication of the sinful nature within the Christian believer. From his perspective the sinful nature is counteracted by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is only through the Holy Spirit’s presence that the Christian can live victoriously above sin.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰Heppenstall, *The Man Who Is God*, 147.

¹⁵¹Heppenstall in this instance uses the word “sinful” in a theological sense, thereby equating it with being self-centered, selfish, and independent from God.

¹⁵²Heppenstall, *The Man Who Is God*, 148.

¹⁵³Heppenstall, *The Man Who Is God*, 140.

¹⁵⁴Heppenstall, *Is Perfection Possible*, 6.

Section Summary

Andreasen took the postlapsarian position of the Waggoner and Jones era and added his own special flavor to it. As was noticed, his theology assumed the postlapsarian position even before the publication of *QOD*. However, after the publication of *QOD* he came out and provided staunch defense for the postlapsarian position. Furthermore, following the example of Jones, Andreasen combined the doctrine of the atonement with his soteriology and Christology and in doing so produced his theological legacy—final generation theology—which continues to have popular appeal within Adventism.

On the other hand, Heppenstall (who did most of most of his writing on this subject during the post-*QOD* era) presents a position neither consistent with *Questions on Doctrine*'s prelapsarian position, nor with the postlapsarian position of E. J. Waggoner, A. T. Jones, and M. L. Andreasen. Heppenstall recognizes the points of similarity as well as difference between Christ and the rest of humanity. Furthermore, he was a major influence upon later Adventist theologians. Effectively, emanating from this period are three streams of thought—two major, and one minor—on the human nature of Christ within Adventism. The postlapsarian position, like that of Andreasen, and the mediating position, like that of Heppenstall, are the major streams. The minor stream is the prelapsarian position like that of the authors of *QOD*. However, all three positions still retained supporters within Adventism.

Developments beyond the Mid-1970s

The post-*QOD* era within Adventism, especially during the mid-1970s and the 1980s witnessed an intense debate on the humanity of Christ, and for this reason,

choosing contributors upon which to focus poses a challenge. Among those who stand out more prominently than others are the duos of Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short, and Colin Standish and Russell Standish. On the other hand, Desmond Ford and Gillian Ford played a crucial role in the debate during the 1970s and 80s, though after that they were less closely associated with mainstream Seventh-day Adventism. Simultaneously, Arthur Leroy Moore, made his own unique contribution to the debate.

Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short¹⁵⁵

Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short spent many years working as Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Africa. During this time, they researched the 1888 General Conference Session and especially the theology of righteousness by faith which was a major issue at that meeting. Their research findings were not consistent with the popular appraisal of that General Conference Session. When, upon their return to the United States, they shared those findings with top personnel at the General Conference headquarters, they were advised against publishing their findings and returned to their African mission field without publishing their findings. However, those findings were later published by a Adventist layman, A. L. Hudson.¹⁵⁶

Later, Wieland attended the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, where he wrote a term paper on the human nature of Christ. In this work, among other things, he

¹⁵⁵Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short have written numerous works together, as well as works authored individually. This dissertation, while recognizing their individual works on the subject under examination, sees their views as one and thus does not distinguish between the two.

¹⁵⁶See A. Leroy Moore, *Questions on Doctrine Revisited* (Ithaca, MI: AB Publishing, 2005), 42-43. Moore also posits the view that publications coming from persons from the upper echelons of the church may have been a contributing factor to M. L. Andreasen's reaction to *QOD*. For more on that, see his *Questions on Doctrine Revisited*, 40-51.

argued that in order to experience the full strength of temptation—the same strength as the rest of humanity who participate in sin, Christ had to have a sinful human nature.¹⁵⁷ He insisted, however, that having a sinful nature does not automatically mean one would participate in sin.¹⁵⁸ He defines sin as a “deep heart-alienation from God” as well as “spiritual separation from Him...actual heart-enmity against Him.” Christ on the cross experienced spiritual separation from the Father, His heart was not at enmity with the Father. Consequently, even though one is separated from God, that need not force one to sin—separation does not have to become alienation.¹⁵⁹

Additionally, since Jesus had to die as sacrifice for sin it was necessary for Him to *not* come in the sinless nature of Adam before the fall since Adam, before the fall, was not subject to death.¹⁶⁰ To Wieland, this also has implications for the atonement because if Christ did not have a sinful nature then His redemption and atonement are limited.¹⁶¹ Thus, the atonement depends upon Christ’s taking sinful flesh,¹⁶² though Wieland also distinguishes between a *sinful* nature and a *sinning* nature. The first indicates the

¹⁵⁷Robert Wieland, “Christology and the Human Unconscious: An Exploratory Study” (Unpublished Term Paper, Andrews University, 1965), 9.

¹⁵⁸Robert Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby if He Took Our Fallen, Sinful Nature?* (Berrien Springs, MI: Glad Tidings, 1997), 23. This can be theologically problematic since it opens the possibility that other human beings, with sinful human natures, could refrain from ever sinning. Since all human beings have sinful natures, are there some human beings who would not participate in sin even without having Christ as Savior?

¹⁵⁹Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 10.

¹⁶⁰Wieland, *The Broken Link: Some Questions on the Nature of Christ Concerning Apparent Contradictions in Scripture and in the Writings of Ellen White* (Harrisville, NH: MMI Press, 1981), 5.

¹⁶¹Wieland, “Christology and the Human Unconscious: An Exploratory Study,” 10.

¹⁶²Wieland, *Made Like ... His Brethren to Make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People* (Paris, OH: Glad Tidings, 1991), vi.

possibility of sin, whereas the second indicates the actuality of sinning.¹⁶³ Consequently, even though Christ was “made to be sin” He at no time participated in sin.¹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, one may ask how was Jesus, with a sinful human nature, able to escape the corruption of sin from birth to adulthood?

Christ was Sinless as a Baby

Wieland asserts that Christ was not like all other babies who are born sinners and selfish by nature.¹⁶⁵ He believed that when Jesus was a baby, He did not even have temper tantrums. If He only had “one temper tantrum” then He would have been a sinner, thereby disqualifying Him from being the Savior.¹⁶⁶ There is also a “new element” in Jesus which was never present in any other baby: “Christ was *agape* in human flesh” (emphasis in the original). He was able to be perfectly sinless as a baby because “He was always in heart-union with His Father.” This special joining of human sinfulness with divine *agape* resulted in the condemnation of sin in the flesh.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Jesus’ “divine paternity” imparted to Him an “advantage that no other human baby ever had.” At the same time, when believers have His faith, they possess this same advantage.

¹⁶³Wieland, “Christology and the Human Unconscious: An Exploratory Study,” 9.

¹⁶⁴Wieland, 14

¹⁶⁵Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 2.

¹⁶⁶Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 1. One is inclined to think that Wieland is doing speculative theology here. However, there is an even weightier issue at hand: babies, even before the age of accountability, commit sins. It seems that in his haste to protect the postlapsarian view, Wieland imputes sin to babies and at the same time diminishes the concept of sin. If by not committing sin as a baby, Jesus was able to remain free from sin, then it would follow that any other child who did the same would remain free from sin.

¹⁶⁷Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 2.

Simultaneously, His divine paternity actually worked as a disadvantage since it exposed Him to the most severe conflict any human being has ever faced.¹⁶⁸

Additionally, just as there are temptations facing adults, there are temptations facing infants.¹⁶⁹ And just as He did when He became an adult, Christ, as an infant knew how to say no to the temptations of Satan.¹⁷⁰ Consequently, as a result of saying no to Satan's temptations, Christ was able to live without a taint of sin.¹⁷¹ In answering the question "if Christ was 'born without a taint of sin' was He not different from us who are 'born with inherent propensities of disobedience'?" Wieland asserts that Christ was different because He was sinless whereas the rest of humanity is sinful—fallen sinners. The difference lay in His character. At the same time His "genetic heredity" was the same as the rest of humanity. He then goes on to explain "inherent propensities of disobedience" as possibly coming through the genes, whereas inherited tendencies indicates coming through "prenatal influences."¹⁷²

He also makes a distinction between "*equipment*" and "*performance*" (emphasis in the original). For him, Jesus had the same equipment as the rest of humanity but His performance was sinless. Consequently, when the angel, in Luke 1:35, referred to the

¹⁶⁷Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 2.

¹⁶⁸Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 12

¹⁶⁹Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 18

¹⁷⁰Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 17.

¹⁷¹For him there was never a taint of sin in Christ since he never participated in sin. See, Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 15.

¹⁷²Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 15, 16. One is inclined to think that Wieland may not have given an adequate answer his own question. Earlier he associated "taint of sin" with participating in sin. No child is born participating in sin. Thus, for the sake of logic, all children are born without a "taint of sin." Furthermore, his explanation of "inherent propensities of disobedience" does not appear to be adequate.

baby to be born of Mary as “that holy thing,” he was speaking of Jesus’ performance and not His equipment.¹⁷³ Additionally, Christ was not “programmed” towards either sin or holiness.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, there is a difference between Christ and other human children. Even though human beings are born naturally separated from God, Christ was not like that. The power of a praying parent bridges that gap. Without it, the child will grow to be “perverse in disposition, expressing temper tantrums.” It is through the faith of the mother that the child is kept “under the shadow of the Almighty.” However, Christ is different because He had faith and as a result, he never had an evil propensity in Him.¹⁷⁵

Evil Propensities

According to Wieland, when Ellen White speaks of Christ not having “propensities of sin” she meant “*yielding* to temptation, a *harboring* of an evil purpose, that would be the compulsive result of a previous involvement in an act, word, or thought of sin.” Furthermore, when she says Christ did not have an “evil propensity” she is speaking about character. To have an evil propensity or “taint of corruption” resting on

¹⁷³Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 6. There appears to be one problematic area with this assertion. If the angel was glorying in Jesus’ performance even before He was born and carried out any performance, then it could appear that there was not any possibility of Jesus failing since the angel already knew of His perfect performance even before He performed it.

¹⁷⁴Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 14. If that is indeed the case then He was neutral. And if He was born neutral, are all babies born neutral or are they programmed towards either sin or holiness?

¹⁷⁵Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 26. Not only is he acknowledging another difference between Christ and the rest of humanity, he is also positing what appears to be theologically unsound. How could a baby have faith? How could Christ, as a baby, have perfect faith and yet have no advantage over the rest of humanity—who are alienated from God at birth? If Christ was righteous by faith, even from childhood, then it seems He had a tremendous advantage over the rest of the human family. Furthermore, if Christ, as a baby, had faith, then should not all babies have faith? And if all babies have faith, then should we not baptize babies?

Him means He would have first yielded to temptation.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, even though Christ did not have any evil propensities to sin, He was still tempted on the point of passion.¹⁷⁷ Passions, in Wieland's estimation, are a "compulsive *surrender* to evil."¹⁷⁸ Consequently, Christ did not possess "like passions" because He never yielded to temptation. It is only after one yields to temptation that passions develop.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Christ never yielded to temptation. But did He experience the same temptations as other human beings? Was Christ tempted externally as well as internally?

The Temptations of Christ

Wieland, using James 1:15, argues that Jesus, just like the rest of the humanity, was tempted from without as well as within. Adam was only tempted from without.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, when Christ said "I have overcome the world," it was a demonstration of His battle with inner urges to sin. Were this not the case then He would have been making a rather dishonest boast. Temptations arising from within, just like those from without are

¹⁷⁶Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 12, emphases in the original.

¹⁷⁷Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 20.

¹⁷⁸Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 11. His definition of passions seems to lead him into somewhat of a tangle. If passions are a result of compulsive surrender to evil, and Christ never surrendered to evil, then did He have any passions? One is also inclined to ask if Christ's cleansing of the temple was not a display of passion? Interestingly enough, Wieland is willing to concede that Jesus had righteous anger however that righteous anger was not passion. See, Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 20.

¹⁷⁹Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 13.

¹⁸⁰Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 5. One has to wonder about the basis of Adam's temptation. Was he tempted to eat the fruit because he was hungry or was there another reason for his choice to eat the fruit? Did he eat the fruit out of his love for Eve? Now love itself is not sinful. However, it becomes sinful when it is turned away from God and some other person or object is loved more than God. If it is that Adam was tempted because of his love for Eve and not because of hunger then he was apparently tempted from the inside and not from the outside.

not to be equated with sin.¹⁸¹ In that regard, even though He was tempted by Satan, Jesus' head remained untouched; however, His heel was touched. This means that His mind remained holy while His flesh was sinful.¹⁸² Additionally, throughout His life, the temptation to resort to His own power to get Himself out of danger was real to Christ and He resisted it. Had He yielded to such a temptation/inclination He would have sinned.¹⁸³

Not only did Christ have to resist the inner urge to resort to His own power, Satan, the wily foe that he is, knowing the kind of individuals in Jesus' genealogy, searched their minds in an effort to find a strategy to use against Jesus—a strategy that would prove invincible.¹⁸⁴ However, Satan's best efforts were insufficient to make Christ fall. One of the contributing factors to Satan's failure is the fact that sin comes from volition and not genetic inheritance.¹⁸⁵ Likewise, volition was also involved in the perfect sinlessness of Christ.¹⁸⁶ Consequently, in order for Jesus' temptations to be true, and in order for Him to be "tempted in every way just as we are," He had to have had a fallen nature. Resultantly, the temptations of the world, namely those mentioned in 1 John 2:16, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life," had to have been real to Him.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹Wieland, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 48

¹⁸²Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 10.

¹⁸³Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 19.

¹⁸⁴Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 59.

¹⁸⁵Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 23.

¹⁸⁶Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby*, 8.

¹⁸⁷Wieland, *Gold Tried in the Fire: An Exciting Report of What Righteousness by Faith has Meant to Adventists Since 1888* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1983), 72.

In that regard, there is a close identification between Christ and the believer. Thus, it was out of His genuine identification with sinners that Jesus was baptized. Though He never committed sin, He knew what the guilty sinner feels.¹⁸⁸ And since John the Baptist baptized people unto repentance, and since Christ was baptized by John, then, Christ was baptized unto repentance. Other than that, His baptism would have been a display of hypocrisy.¹⁸⁹ However, not only does Christ show a close identification with the believer He also wants the believer to have a close identification with Him.

Christ invites human beings to partake of His holiness in just the same way as He partook of sinful human nature.¹⁹⁰ Had Christ not taken fallen human nature then He would have been remote from humanity. Furthermore, spiritual development within the church is hampered when this view of Christ is not understood.¹⁹¹ Therefore, having a human nature with “all its liabilities” highlights God’s gift to the human race as articulated in John 3:16.¹⁹² Furthermore, since Christ accepted a deteriorated heredity He accepted “physical,” “moral,” and “spiritual” deterioration. This was done in order to set humanity an example.¹⁹³ Two other things are of note in this schema. First, Christ had a

¹⁸⁸Wieland, *As Many as I Love: Christ’s Call to Laodicea* (Uniontown, OH: Adventist Realities, 1986), 36.

¹⁸⁹Wieland, 34. If repentance means “godly sorrow for sin” and Christ never sinned, then of what was He repenting?

¹⁹⁰Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 99.

¹⁹¹Wieland, *Gold Tried in the Fire*, 70, 71.

¹⁹²Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 61.

¹⁹³Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 17. If Christ’s nature was spiritually and morally deteriorated, is it then that He, by His righteous life, became morally and spiritually higher? Did He increase the stature of His moral and spiritual worth?

spiritual purpose for taking human nature. As such, He did not become human in order to experience things such as hunger, thirst, tiredness or the need for sleep.¹⁹⁴ Second, since sin began before God created the earth, the salvation of human beings plays a secondary role in the cosmic conflict. Ultimately, the gospel resolves the great controversy and eradicates sin from the universe.¹⁹⁵

Consequently, a proper understanding of the liabilities Christ assumed in taking sinful human nature is the “last essential building-block in construction of the temple of truth.”¹⁹⁶ In light of that, therefore, he sees a linkage among the human nature of Christ, the truth of the Holy Spirit, and the eventual end of sin.¹⁹⁷ Therefore a proper understanding the truth of Christ’s human nature enables the Church to live victoriously.¹⁹⁸ This is so because our understandings of God’s justice and fairness are shaped by our understanding of Christ.¹⁹⁹ However, when the church understands that “Christ traversed the entire terrain of our depravity and conquered it—not without pain and terrible risk, but without defilement,”²⁰⁰ then, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit believers will also live without defilement.

¹⁹⁴Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 16. This appears to be a clear case of arguing against the notion that Christ, in His human nature, experienced some of the consequences of the fall, such as hunger, tiredness and the need for sleep. Thus, He experienced physical infirmities but not spiritual degeneration.

¹⁹⁵Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 63.

¹⁹⁶Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 74.

¹⁹⁷Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 85.

¹⁹⁸Robert J. Wieland, “Some Questions Regarding the Nature of Christ” (Unpublished, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI, n.d), 1.

¹⁹⁹Donald K. Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 99.

²⁰⁰Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren*, 101.

Thus, we have seen the heavy emphasis by Robert Wieland and Donald Short on the sinful human nature of Christ. To a certain extent it, as has been shown, they connect it to their soteriology and also highlight eschatological implications and the great controversy motif. Contemporaneous with these two is another duo—Colin Standish and Russell Standish.

Colin Standish and Russell Standish

Brothers Colin and Russell Standish identify themselves as “historic Adventists.”²⁰¹ Similar to Robert Wieland and Donald Short, they place a rather high premium upon the teachings of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones regarding the human nature of Christ. The Standishes believe that the ultimate mystery of salvation is God manifested in fallen flesh.²⁰² Naturally, therefore, they disagree with the notion of Christ coming in an unfallen human nature. For them, the idea of Christ coming in the nature of Adam before the fall is a legacy of Augustine’s theology, connected to his understanding of original sin. Original sin leads to total depravity²⁰³ which in turn leads to the inability²⁰⁴ to obey God’s law perfectly.²⁰⁵ However, obedience is of exceptionally high

²⁰¹See the work, Colin Standish, *Historic Adventism: What are the Chief Beliefs of what has Become Known as “Historic Adventism?”* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2009).

²⁰²Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2010), 57. This is their most definitive work on the topic under review.

²⁰³See “Preliminary Note on Theological Terms,” at the beginning of chapter 2. Total depravity or total inability are equivalent theological terms which mean a human being is completely incapable of doing anything to merit salvation.

²⁰⁴Although Colin and Russell Standish may not have intended to support the Tridentine soteriology, there seems to be a tendency within their understanding of the human condition that is closer to the Council of Trent than Protestant soteriology. According to Trent’s decrees on original sin, concupiscence—the human tendency to sin—is not in itself sinful. This idea naturally lends itself towards a more act-based understanding—rather than an ontological understanding of sin. See, Council of Trent, Fifth Session, Decree Concerning Original Sin. “If any one denies, that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus

importance and in their view, both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White show obedience as a condition of salvation.²⁰⁶ Therefore, obedience is a necessary condition in order to be fitted for heaven.²⁰⁷ Additionally, complete victory over sin, just like obedience, is a condition of salvation.²⁰⁸ Thus, it was important, from their perspective, for Christ to have a fallen human nature.

It was necessary for Christ to have a fallen nature in order for Him to rescue humanity from the degradation of sin.²⁰⁹ They argue that the incarnation was essential for the salvation of the human race. Not only is the incarnation a mystery, but it is a “sacred wonderment.” The fact of the incarnation means God was manifest in “flesh like we possess—skin, muscle, bone, sinews, internal organs, blood, enzymes, hormones, genes,

Christ, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away; but says that it is only rased [razed], or not imputed; let him be anathema. For, in those who are born again, there is nothing that God hates; because, There is no condemnation to those who are truly buried together with Christ by baptism into death; who walk not according to the flesh, but, putting off the old man, and putting on the new who is created according to God, are made innocent, immaculate, pure, harmless, and beloved of God, heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ; so that there is nothing whatever to retard their entrance into heaven. But this holy synod confesses and is sensible, that in the baptized there remains concupiscence, or an incentive (to sin); which, whereas it is left for our exercise, cannot injure those who consent not, but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ; yea, he who shall have striven lawfully shall be crowned. *This concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood it to be called sin, as being truly and properly sin in those born again, but because it is of sin, and inclines to sin.*” Emphasis added.
https://documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/15451545,_Concilium_Tridentinum,_Canons_And DECREES,_EN.pdf (accessed October 17, 2022).

²⁰⁵Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The Everlasting Gospel* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2007), 76-78.

²⁰⁶Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *Adventism Vindicated* (Paradise, CA: Historic Truth, 1980), 5. Later in the same work they claim that “commandment keeping, though not the basis of salvation, is the condition of salvation.” See *Adventism Vindicated*, 43. Within the context of their understanding of salvation, then, obedience plays a very important part.

²⁰⁷Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 43.

²⁰⁸Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 73.

²⁰⁹Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 65.

nerves!” And even though it was an “amazing degradation” for God to become human, it was required if humanity should be saved.²¹⁰ And since Jesus confessed His inability to do anything on His own strength, John 5:30, He was emphasizing the fact that He was in the same position as the rest of the human family.²¹¹

Thus, being like the rest of the human family, Jesus had a fallen genetic nature.²¹² The inclusion of individuals who committed all manner of sins in Christ’s genealogies helps to highlight this fact.²¹³ The Standishes understand that, before the fall, “Adam possessed a great intellect and possessed no genetic weaknesses which predisposed him to sin.”²¹⁴ On the other hand, those who come from Adam’s lineage are weak physically and mentally and also “possess genetic weaknesses which predispose” them to sin. Human beings, all human beings, possess a fallen genetic nature.²¹⁵ They associate Christ’s genetic nature with the “lower nature” (the “flesh”), and His “higher nature” with His “will and character.” The higher nature includes things such as “thoughts and

²¹⁰Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 66.

²¹¹Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 79.

²¹²Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 71. They define genetic nature as lower nature. Human beings remain with their lower natures unchanged until the Second Coming. See *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 92.

²¹³Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 91. This argument appears to be somewhat shaky. They recognize so themselves and point to the fact that Joseph was not related to Christ by blood. However, they then go on to make a claim based upon Jesus’ exposure to training from Joseph during His formative years. This argument seems to make Joseph a bad parent who exerted a negative influence upon Jesus. The Bible does not seem to shed any light whatsoever upon this issue.

²¹⁴Working with the assumption of Adam being a physical giant, they then present the case of Christ, who, during the incarnation, according to the biblical data, was not a physical giant. Even though they do not state it, they seem to infer, and strongly at that too, that this proves Christ did not have the human nature of Adam before the fall. See, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 83.

feelings.” They believe that Christ’s lower nature was fallen, but concede that Christ’s higher nature was not fallen.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, Christ never had a carnal nature even though He had a fallen lower nature. He always “possessed an unblemished character.”²¹⁷

Continuing with the theme of genetic nature equals fallen human nature, they mention that Christ experienced pain and weariness and even death.²¹⁸ They go on to add that such things will not be part of the experience of the redeemed after the Second Coming.²¹⁹ Therefore, a Christ with an unfallen genetic nature thwarts the whole plan of salvation. Without the same fallen genetic nature as the rest of humanity Christ would not have been able to die for our sins.²²⁰ Thus His human nature had to be completely the same as the rest of the human family.

Therefore, they reject the suggestion that Christ took a fallen physical and mental nature, but an unfallen spiritual nature. To them this cannot be, since the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of an individual function in an interdependent manner. Furthermore, the goal of Christian living is to bring them into harmony with each

²¹⁵Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 81. It seems to appear that they are making the transmission of sin genetic.

²¹⁶Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The 2007 Questions on Doctrine Conference*, vol. 3 (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2007), 217.

²¹⁷Standish and Standish, *The 2007 Questions on Doctrine Conference*, 3:253. If character is formed, and Christ always “possessed an unblemished character,” then did He form that character in the womb?

²¹⁸They add that during the incarnation “Christ experienced a whole range of human emotions.” Thus, He experienced anguish in Gethsemane, sensed scorn, experienced hunger, became thirsty, needed human companionship, felt sorrow. See, Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 73-78.

²¹⁹Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 84.

²²⁰Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 85.

other.²²¹ Assigning to Christ a fallen physical nature but an unfallen moral nature is actually pandering to Greek dualism. Since Christ had a fallen physical nature, then His whole nature was fallen.²²² And as such, the New Testament explicitly portrays Christ as having a fallen sinful human nature: example (John 1:14; Romans 1:3; Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4, 5; 1 Timothy 3:16).²²³ Nevertheless, even though He had a fallen nature He did not have a carnal mind.²²⁴

On the other hand, other human beings possess carnal minds. They are “born with evil tendencies, with natural inclinations to move in pathways that alienate from God. Unconverted man will naturally become a sinner and become separated from God.”²²⁵ At the same time they admit that sinful human beings are born in a helpless state.²²⁶ However, human beings are sinners because they sin and not the other way around. As such, they have no problems admitting that all human beings are born “unconverted, with a predisposition to sin.” Consequently, unconverted people fall into sin—this is universal. However, God does not count sin against anyone unless and until he/she sins

²²¹Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The Theology of Questions on Doctrine: Fidelity or Compromise* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2007), 57, 58.

²²²Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *Deceptions of the New Theology* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 1989), 39.

²²³Standish and Standish, *The Theology of Questions on Doctrine*, 112.

²²⁴Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 53.

²²⁵Standish and Standish, *Deceptions of the New Theology*, 49. This understanding of the nature of human beings seems to indicate that at birth no one, though unconverted, needs the new birth. There is a natural tendency toward moving in the way which results in separation from God. However, since it is only a tendency, and since it is the pathway which leads to separation, then it will follow that human beings can choose not to follow pathways which lead to alienation from God. In that light, human beings, by choosing the right paths, can actually save themselves.

²²⁶Standish and Standish, *Deceptions of the New Theology*, 58.

volitionally²²⁷ or as a result of negligence. “Until God provides us knowledge of sin He does not count us guilty.”²²⁸ Nevertheless, those who accept Christ into their hearts are given a spiritual nature by Him.²²⁹ But what about Christ? Did He, since possessing a fallen nature, need conversion as well?

Even though Christ was born with a fallen nature, due to His life of sinlessness He did not have to experience the new birth.²³⁰ Thus, the difference between Christ and the rest of humanity is character and not nature.²³¹ The sinlessness of Christ’s character is evidenced in His victorious living in spite of temptations. And since Hebrews 4:15 mentions Christ was tempted “in all points,” they conclude this to mean temptation both on an internal and external basis. Using Matthew 4:1-11 as their basis, they claim that Christ had both an internal and external understanding of the temptations of Satan. Had He not been tempted from within, then His brain would not have been able to recognize

²²⁷In their view, the biblical definition of sin includes two important things; “knowledge” and “volition.” In that regard “sin is a willful act and therefore inexcusable.” See Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 30.

²²⁸Standish and Standish, *The Theology of Questions on Doctrine*, 109, 110. It appears that this concept is used to account for Christ having a sinful fallen nature while still remaining free from sin. It certainly appears to take care of the sinning part however it does not appear to take care of the unconverted part. Is it that they are proposing that Jesus was born “unconverted?” And if He was, then when was He converted? Furthermore, if He needed conversion, then how was He converted and who made atonement for Him. These questions are not just moot theological questions—they have profound value as regards human salvation. Do we have a Savior who needed to be saved as well?

²²⁹Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 92.

²³⁰Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 63. This assertion appears to pose a number of dangers. First, it opens the possibility of salvation without Christ. To argue that Christ’s character exempted Him from needing the new birth effectively opens the way for any other human being to do the same. Second, this line of argument also seems to suggest that salvation is only needed because of bad character and not because of sinful human nature. Third, if character is formed then how was Jesus able to form a sinless character in the womb? The only way He can be excluded from needing the new birth on the basis of a sinless character is for Him to have a sinless character from conception. Fourth, this line of reasoning naturally leads to legalism.

²³¹Standish and Standish, *Deceptions of the New Theology*, 43.

the temptation. Furthermore, since Christ has the same nature as every other human being, and since every human being is inclined to give in to temptation, then “He was tempted by the tendency to give in to temptation.”²³² Most importantly, when He was tempted He never used His divinity to overcome—He always depended upon the Father. Thus He was able to set us an example of how to obtain victory over temptations.²³³

The Standishes give two main reasons for Christ having a fallen human nature. First, it was necessary since He had to die²³⁴ and second, it was necessary since He had to be our example.²³⁵ Therefore it was necessary for Christ to endure and overcome temptation thereby giving an example to those who choose Him.²³⁶ That is why it was essential for Christ to be incarnate in fallen human nature. By doing so He was able to satisfy the universe that fallen human beings could keep God’s commandments through the power of the Holy Spirit.²³⁷ Accordingly, because of what Christ has done, God

²³²Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 91.

²³³Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 78.

²³⁴Expositing Galatians 4:4, 5, they take time to explain the phrase “under the law.” They point out that in Romans 6:14 Paul used that term to show the contrast between those “under the law” and those “under grace.” Furthermore, they take note of Paul classing unrepentant sinners as being “under the law.” They then introduce Rom 3:19 and point out that those “under the law” are subject to God’s judgment. From there they conclude that Christ needed to have a fallen human nature in order for Him to be subject to God’s judgment. It may appear that they forgot one bit of their exposition along the way. Earlier on they indicate that the phrase “under the law” is used in reference to those who are unrepentant sinners. But it is obvious in Galatians 4:4, 5, that unrepentant sinners are not the *only* ones “under the law.” See, Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 68-70.

²³⁵Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 70, 71.

²³⁶Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 86, 87.

²³⁷Standish and Standish, *Our Saviour: Human, Divine, or Human-Divine?* 110. Even though they use Ellen White’s *Selected Messages*, bk. 3: 136, they do not provide any biblical support for this claim.

makes it possible for believers to overcome all sin for the sake of His vindication.²³⁸

Thus, believers have a critical role to play in the resolution of the Great Controversy because they vindicate God. And that is why Christ coming in sinful nature is so integral to understanding “the mystery of godliness.”²³⁹

Many of the postulations of Colin and Russell Standish are done in reaction to their fellow Australian, Desmond Ford. As a matter of fact, they use a somewhat pejorative term, “New Theology,” in reference to Ford’s teachings on righteousness by faith. It is to Ford’s understanding of the human nature of Christ that I now turn.

Desmond Ford²⁴⁰ and Gillian Ford²⁴¹

Desmond Ford pastored and worked with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and the United States. In the United States he taught at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California. It was during his time there that he presented a paper denying the need for an investigative judgment—a move which subsequently led to a conference with leading Adventist theologians and ministers at Glacier View, Colorado. Ford did not retract his views and was consequently removed from denominational employment.

²³⁸Standish and Standish, *Adventism Vindicated*, 27.

²³⁹Standish and Standish, *Deceptions of the New Theology*, 45.

²⁴⁰Because the focus of this dissertation is literature within Seventh-day Adventism, only works written by Desmond Ford during his time in SDA ministry are examined in this work.

²⁴¹Even though Desmond Ford is the principal point of focus for this section, his wife, Gillian Ford, wrote a short work on the human nature of Christ and it is seen as a true summary of his understanding. Additionally, in 1982 they came out with a joint publication and Gillian Ford was the author of the section on the human nature of Christ. See Desmond Ford and Gillian Ford, *The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity* (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Publications, 1982), 115-121.

However, he continued to hold membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church until he requested removal from membership in 2001.

Ford contends that even after justification the believer still has “imperfections and “unavoidable deficiencies.”²⁴² He opines that the inclusion of the phrase “forgive us our trespasses” in the Lord’s Prayer seems to indicate that the believers will always have sins for which to be forgiven.²⁴³ This is due to the fact that human nature is “inherently corrupt.” With such a nature, human beings inevitably have thoughts which incline toward evil. Those thoughts come both from the inside and the outside. With Christ, however, no thoughts of evil—temptation—came from the inside.²⁴⁴

And that is why, in their view, having a proper understanding of Christ’s human nature is of such vital importance. Because, as Gillian Ford puts it, having a proper understanding of the humanity of Christ is necessary if one is to have a balanced view of righteousness by faith.²⁴⁵ With that in mind, she contends that “Christ was also born sinless, but took on the physical, mental, and moral weakness of the human race. That is, he assumed the results of the loss of the Tree of Life, but not sin, which is the result of the loss of the Holy Spirit.” His human nature, due to heredity after the fall, was less than

²⁴²Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith” (Unpublished Paper Presented at Pacific Union College, May 18, 1979), 2.

²⁴³Desmond Ford, “How Perfect is Perfect?” (Audio Recording, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI).

²⁴⁴Desmond Ford, *Answers on the Way: Scriptural Answers to Your Questions* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1977), 78.

²⁴⁵Gillian Ford, “The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation” (Unpublished Paper, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI), 3.

Adam's "physically, mentally and spiritually."²⁴⁶ Thus, in Gillian Ford's estimation, during the incarnation Christ took the weaknesses of human beings but not their sinfulness. In like manner He took the sinlessness of Adam but not his physical strength.²⁴⁷

Christ Had Less Capacity Than Adam Before the Fall

On this concept, Desmond Ford concurs with his wife. He holds that even though Christ had a sinless nature, He still had lesser mental, moral and physical capacities than Adam before the fall. This is due to the fact that He was "shut away from the Tree of Life." However, this weakened capacity is not the same as an evil/sinful propensity. It is just one of the results of not having access to the tree of life. Consequently, Christ was affected by sin but not infected with it. In Desmond Ford's understanding, the contemporaries of Ellen White agreed with this position.²⁴⁸ Therefore, in terms of His

²⁴⁶Gillian Ford, "The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation," 6. In a note she explains "moral weakness" to mean a "sense of infirmity as contrasted with propensity." Due to the fall Christ possessed less "nervous vitality and physical strength" as compared to Adam. Therefore, "His mental and spiritual functions...labored under liabilities." See Gillian Ford, "The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation," 8.

²⁴⁷Gillian Ford, "The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation," 10. Even though she sees Christ as having less capacity than Adam before the fall, she believes that in terms of His character, Jesus was all "God intended man should be" and as such He is the ideal to which all believers should strive. See Gillian Ford, "The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation," 50.

²⁴⁸Desmond Ford, "Righteousness by Faith," 6. A later work by Ford cites a paper by Ron Graybill, Warren H. Johns and Tim Poirier of the White Estate. This paper compares Ellen White's statements on the humanity of Christ with those of Henry Melvill. Poirier points out Melvill's use of the terms "innocent infirmities" and "sinful propensities." Prelapsarian Adam had neither of the two, postlapsarian Adam—and his progeny—had both, whereas Christ had the former but not the latter. From this work Desmond Ford and Gillian Ford conclude that when Ellen White used the term sinful nature her definition was not the same as that of traditional Adventists. See, Ford and Ford, *The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity*, 120. For a more detailed look at the comparison between Ellen White and Henry Melvill, see, Ron Graybill, Warren H. Johns, and Tim Poirier "Henry Melvill and Ellen White: A Study of Literary and Theological Relationships" (Washington, DC: Ellen White Estate, 1982).

human nature, “Christ took upon Himself all the effects of the Fall, sin excepted.” Thus, His mental, moral, and physical capacities were less than Adam’s before the fall. It is important, however, to note that this idea in no way compromises His sinless nature.²⁴⁹

Christ Had to Have a Sinless Nature

Desmond Ford postulates that in order for Christ to be the second Adam, He had to have had a sinless nature.²⁵⁰ Thus he argues that Christ began in the same sinless nature as Adam had before the fall. A perfectly sinless nature is “one that [has] no desire for evil and every desire for good.” He cites Luke 1:35; John 3:34; Hebrews 7:26; and 2 Corinthians 5:21 to buttress his point.²⁵¹ This notion is critical to his understanding because for him, only a perfectly sinless nature can produce “perfectly sinless behavior.”²⁵² Consequently, he opines that from the time of His conception Christ was full of the Holy Spirit.²⁵³ In contrast, as Gillian Ford puts it, other human beings are unlike Christ. This is evidenced by the fact that as soon as Adam fell he lost the Holy

²⁴⁹Desmond Ford, *Answers on the Way*, 78.

²⁵⁰Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 6.

²⁵¹Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 3.

²⁵²Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 4. Giving Christ a sinful nature reduces Him to an example and not a sinless substitute. Furthermore, this teaching also tends “towards pantheism as it finds God even in sinfulness” it also promotes “legalism and perfectionism....” See Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 6. The same point is raised by Gillian Ford in *The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity*. For her, the corollary of seeing Christ with a nature exactly the same as the rest of humanity is perfectionism. See, Desmond Ford and Gillian Ford, *The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity*, 116, 117.

²⁵³Desmond Ford, *Answers on the Way*, 78.

Spirit. Depravity, his recognition of his nakedness, and being ashamed confirm this to be so.²⁵⁴

Furthermore, in her understanding “sin is not an inherent part of true human nature.” Due to this fact, Christ’s human nature “could be exactly as we originally were, yet without sin.”²⁵⁵ At the same time, from her perspective, it is not precisely correct to say Christ had an advantage over the rest of humanity. Rather, “it is more correct to say that Christ was different to us,”²⁵⁶ because His sinless nature made Him much more sensitive to sin than we are. Not only was He more sensitive to sin, but He never sinned. And because He never sinned, He had no “conditioned reflexes” due to submitting to temptation through the years. He also had no “memory of failures.”²⁵⁷ In contrast, human beings have conditioned reflexes to sin as well as sinful propensities.

Christ Had No Sinful Tendencies During the Incarnation

Although He was the Son of Mary, Jesus still did not have sinful tendencies. This is so, not because there was in Him no original sin, but rather, because He was freed from sinful tendencies by the “miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.” In making this assertion Gillian Ford compares the conception of Jesus to the work of the Holy Spirit at creation. She also adds that sin is not a “physical entity handed down by genes and

²⁵⁴Gillian Ford, “The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation,” 16.

²⁵⁵Gillian Ford, “The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation,” 19, 20.

²⁵⁶Gillian Ford, “The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation,” 51.

²⁵⁷Gillian Ford, “The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation,” 54.

chromosomes.”²⁵⁸ As should be expected, Desmond Ford agrees with this assertion.

Thus, for him, Christ’s human nature was not the same as that of a converted person since the converted person has to contend with evil propensities.²⁵⁹ Furthermore, he disagrees with the concept of Christ having evil propensities in His flesh but not in His mind. To him, this notion is dualism and does an injustice to the biblical model of the unity of the person. Additionally, propensities have their reality in the mind and it is impossible for a person to be depraved in one part of his/her nature and not be depraved in another. To him this thought is unbiblical.²⁶⁰ Consequently, Christ had to be completely pure, both internally and externally, from the *defilement* of sin while simultaneously suffering the *genetic effects* of sin.

For Desmond Ford, sin includes any lack of conformity to God’s will either in “act, disposition or *state*.”²⁶¹ He understands that Scripture portrays sin as a state.²⁶² When one takes pleasure in the thought of sin or has the desire to sin, that person has already sinned. He argues that Paul in Romans 7 understood this concept and as such was not writing from the perspective of someone who blatantly disobeys God’s law but someone who struggles with the “small sins.”²⁶³ Thus, “there is sin in the desire to sin.” The law requires the believer to hate evil, not just to the extent of refraining from it, but

²⁵⁸Gillian Ford, “The Human Nature of Christ in Salvation,” 50.

²⁵⁹Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 6, 7.

²⁶⁰Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 5, 6.

²⁶¹Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 3, emphasis in the original.

²⁶²Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 4.

²⁶³Desmond Ford, “How Perfect is Perfect?”

to the extent of immediately repudiating its “slightest approach in temptation.”²⁶⁴ He concludes that though temptation, as such, is not sin, it becomes sin if it is not immediately repudiated in a wholehearted manner.²⁶⁵ Therefore, Christ’s humanity was perfectly sinless, perfectly righteous,²⁶⁶ because of His inner and outer purity.

Arthur Leroy Moore

Arthur Leroy Moore began pastoral ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the mid-1950s—during the time of controversy just prior to the publication of *QOD*. Having a heart for reconciliation among the different factions, he emphasizes finding a rapprochement within Adventism.²⁶⁷ One can observe an evolution of his understanding of the human nature of Christ, especially as presented in the writings of Ellen White, from the time of his master’s thesis at Walla Walla College in 1966 to his latest work, *Adventist Cultures in Conflict*, in 2009. Accordingly, this section will survey Moore’s writings on the human nature of Christ, chronologically from 1966 to 2009.

In Moore’s understanding, Ellen White believed that the human tendency toward selfishness stems from human fallenness. Human beings have sinful natures thus there is

²⁶⁴Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 4.

²⁶⁵Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 5.

²⁶⁶The way Desmond Ford sees it, “perfect inherent righteousness means that every thought is brought into captivity to God, being the best possible thought for that moment, God’s glory being uppermost, and the well-being of our neighbor given preeminence over our own as we esteem him better than ourselves—and all this without any other feelings than perfect love, joy, and humility.” See Desmond Ford, “Righteousness by Faith,” 4.

²⁶⁷In his *Questions on Doctrine Revisited*, Moore states that from his 1966 thesis to his 1995 work *Adventism in Conflict*, his major motivation was his desire to resolve the conflict. See Arthur Leroy Moore, *Questions on Doctrine Revisited*, (Ithaca, MI: AB Publishing, 2005), 9-12. His latest work, *Adventism in Conflict: Principles of Reconciliation*, by its very title also highlights this emphasis.

a natural inclination toward evil—and human beings are incapable of resisting that inclination without divine aid.²⁶⁸ Consequently, instead of reflecting the image of God, humans naturally tend to reflect the image of Satan.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, the fall has had a cumulative effect of perversion upon the human family.²⁷⁰ And even though, from Moore’s perspective, White believes in the bondage of the will, yet at the same time she does not exempt human beings from responsibility for their actions.²⁷¹ Thus Moore sees White as advocating transformation of the person through the work of the Holy Spirit. He also holds that in her estimation, humans continue to have a sinful disposition, even after conversion. Thus, while there is control of the mind by the Holy Spirit—perfection of the mind—at the same time the defects of the brain remain.²⁷² However, with regard to her understanding of the human nature of Christ, Moore posits an interesting theory.

He bases his theory on a statement from Ellen White:

In taking upon Himself *man’s nature* in its *fallen condition*, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed.... and yet He “knew no sin.” ... We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ.²⁷³

²⁶⁸A. Leroy Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man as it Relates to the Objectives of Bible Teaching” (MA Thesis, Walla Walla College, 1966), 62.

²⁶⁹Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man,” 61.

²⁷⁰Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man,” 57.

²⁷¹Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man,” 59.

²⁷²Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man,” 80.

²⁷³*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* 5:1131, emphasis Moore’s; originally published in *Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898, and reprinted in E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 256.

Moore concludes that Ellen White saw Christ as having two distinct human natures. He had a fallen human nature, received from His earthly mother via hereditary, which was identical to the fallen nature possessed by the rest of humanity. On the other hand, He also had another nature—which stemmed from the combination of the human and divine nature, and which was “so antagonistic to sin that there was not even the slightest tendency or inclination to respond to the clamors of the sinful nature.”²⁷⁴

In order to elucidate upon his point, he argues that Ellen White had a twofold understanding of the centers of the human mind. In this view, the mind has a lower and a higher center. In like manner, Moore concludes, White would have seen Christ’s sinful nature in the same manner as the lower nature and His sinless nature in the same light as the higher nature. Christ never gave the lower nature the opportunity to express itself since He kept it under subjection to the higher nature.²⁷⁵ However, if Christ had two centers of control in His mind how did He control the lower center with the higher during His infancy?

²⁷⁴Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man,” 67, 68. The challenge with this idea is the lack of scriptural evidence to substantiate it. Additionally, he does not offer any additional Ellen White writings to support his position. This concept also seems to divide the humanity of Christ into two—thereby making Him somewhat of a schizophrenic.

²⁷⁵Moore, “A Study of Ellen White’s Concept of the Nature of Man,” 68, 69. This position seems to be somewhat worrisome. First, Moore does not present any biblical evidence to support his claim of Christ possessing a triad of natures—one divine and two humans. Second, he does not provide enough Ellen White evidence to support his interpretation of the particular statement under review. Third, though the lower and higher nature concept seems solid at the onset it is not as sound as one may think. If one identifies the lower nature with the physical desires, then one has to take into consideration Jesus’ statement in Mark 7:14-21 where He speaks about the heart being the source of ungodly desires. Furthermore, Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” also highlights the perversity of the heart/mind; see Matthew 5:21-27. Consequently, there seems to be a problem in identifying exactly what are the lower and higher natures. Indeed, it is easy to identify good and perverse desires, but they stem from the same place in the same person. Interestingly enough, however, even though Moore maintains the concept of the lower and higher natures of the mind, his later writings on the humanity of Christ seem to discard the more rigid definition of two distinct human natures.

In dealing with Christ's sinlessness before He reached the age of accountability, Moore sees White as saying that Christ, in His pre-incarnate state, voluntarily chose to surrender to the Father's will and to become incarnate in the body prepared for Him.²⁷⁶ Thus, Christ made a conscious decision, before the incarnation, to be "a temple of the Holy Spirit."²⁷⁷ Moore does acknowledge the difference between Christ as a child and other children because of His pre-incarnate decision. However, he contends that Ellen White did not see this as giving Him an advantage over the rest of the human family.²⁷⁸ This gives us a summary of his understanding at the time of his 1966 master's thesis. Let us now examine his views as adduced in his 1979 Ph.D. dissertation.²⁷⁹

Moore's dissertation compared the views of Ellen White and Desmond Ford on righteousness by faith. This work examines the humanity of Christ mainly within the context of righteousness by faith. Thus, he speaks of Christ as providing a fourfold example to humanity; "enduring, learning obedience, and overcoming, in showing what

²⁷⁶Here Moore apparently alludes to Hebrews 10:5-7, which quotes from Psalm 40:6-8.

²⁷⁷Moore, "A Study of Ellen White's Concept of the Nature of Man," 72, 73. Moore, however, seems to forget that in His pre-incarnate state Christ was only divine and not human. Thus, by making decisions through His divine nature, Christ was doing something no other human beings have ever, or could ever do, except as by faith they become partakers of the divine nature. Additionally, whereas children, before the age of accountability may develop certain bad habits that may then become entrenched in adulthood, Christ had no such challenge because of His pre-incarnate decision.

²⁷⁸Moore, "A Study of Ellen White's Concept of the Nature of Man," 40. It is difficult to see Christ as having no advantage over other human beings because of His pre-incarnate decision. This is to be contrasted with other children, who, through a combination of heredity, environment, and choice develop bad habits. There is also the case of children who have been psychologically scarred because of things to which they were exposed before they reached the age of accountability. Christ had no such challenge, according to Moore's assertion, and as such one wonders how did He not have an advantage over other children?

²⁷⁹A. Leroy Moore, "Ellen White's Concept of Righteousness by Faith as it Relates to Contemporary SDA Issues," Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1979. The dissertation was published in facsimile as *The Theology Crisis: A Study in Righteousness by Faith* (Corpus Christi, TX: Life Seminars, 1980).

‘we must’ do.”²⁸⁰ Consequently, to him, White differentiated between sinfulness and sinful nature. When she speaks of sinfulness she has “experience and character” in mind and when she speaks of sinful nature she has “inheritance” in mind.²⁸¹ Therefore it is easy for him to see her as portraying Christ as having a fallen human nature, but at the same time remaining uncorrupted by it.²⁸² Moore concludes that White makes no claim to Christ not having an advantage over fallen humanity, because the “advantage” He had is available to all who are willing to live in subjection to His will.²⁸³

For Moore, Ellen White taught perfection in the sense of having victory despite weakness. Thus, the fallen human nature of Christ comes to the fore—He was victorious even though He possessed a fallen human nature.²⁸⁴ For Moore, the key to Ellen White’s understanding of Christ’s perfect sinless lies in His uninfected will.²⁸⁵ On the other hand, perfection for the believer, calls for “strenuous effort,” but the motivation, faculties, and energy are not the believer’s but Christ’s. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the believer to cooperate with Christ on a constant basis; continually dying to self and denying his/her own independence.²⁸⁶ So the key to perfection is having Christ, and not self, at the center

²⁸⁰Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 258.

²⁸¹Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 268.

²⁸²Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 250.

²⁸³Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 274.

²⁸⁴Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 284.

²⁸⁵Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 269.

²⁸⁶Moore, “Ellen White’s Concept of Righteousness by Faith,” 287.

of one's being.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, perfection has to do with the believer's increase in faith, reaching a stage where she/he no longer responds to either the internal or external promptings of sin. This also involves the repudiation of the believer's own righteousness.²⁸⁸ In this work Moore emphasizes Christ's humanity within the context of righteousness by faith—especially as regards holy living and perfection. His three latest works, however, appear to have a somewhat different emphasis.

Moore's three latest works set forth most definitively his mature perspective on the human nature of Christ. In these he also makes a concerted attempt to diffuse the theological tension within Adventism as regards Christ's humanity. In doing so he uses a concept he calls "paradox of truth." For him, "truth is by nature paradoxical...it always contains balancing principles."²⁸⁹ He defines paradoxical truths as truths which are apparently contradictory but are meant to be held in tension.²⁹⁰ Within this context, he moves into highlighting the paradoxical truth of Christ's humanity.

For Moore, in Romans 8 where Paul talks about being "in the flesh," Paul does not mean the same thing as being in sinful flesh because those who are "in the Spirit" are at the same time still in sinful flesh—but they are no longer "in the flesh." They still have a sinful nature—but they cease from being "carnal," that is, controlled by their sinful

²⁸⁷Moore, "Ellen White's Concept of Righteousness by Faith," 288.

²⁸⁸Moore, "Ellen White's Concept of Righteousness by Faith," 286. Apparently, Moore desires to steer clear of any self-centered perfection thus placing the focus upon the work of Christ in the believer.

²⁸⁹A. Leroy Moore, *Adventist Cultures in Conflict: Principles of Reconciliation* (USA: Moore Publishing, 2009), 11.

²⁹⁰Moore, *Adventist Cultures in Conflict*, 12.

nature.²⁹¹ On the other hand, in Moore's estimation, Jesus' likeness to humanity, mentioned in Romans 8:3, is a reference to His physical nature and not His spiritual nature. When Jesus assumed human nature, He assumed a prelapsarian spiritual nature. Therefore, by taking sinful flesh Jesus was able to restore to humanity Adam's spiritual nature before sin.²⁹² In summary, according to Moore, Christ had a sinful nature as regards his physical body, but a sinless nature as regards His spirit.²⁹³ And, in case one may ask how this could be, Moore reverts to a concept he adduced in his MA thesis.

Moore emphatically states that Christ was exactly like the rest of the human family in terms of His biological inheritance, but He was *not completely* like other humans in the totality of His human nature. His higher nature, or spiritual faculty, was never infected by sin. "From His conception the Holy Spirit directed His body every moment!"²⁹⁴ With regard to a specific identification of the lower and higher natures, Moore strongly implies that the lower nature has to do with the impulses of the body—and these are akin with "animal passions and perverted human emotions."²⁹⁵

²⁹¹Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 153.

²⁹²Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 146. Moore's postulation effectively places the born-again believer in the same position where Jesus began.

²⁹³Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 147.

²⁹⁴Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 150.

²⁹⁵In Mark 7:21-23 Jesus identified sins such as fornication, murder, theft, covetousness, pride and envy as proceeding from within the individual. Thus Jesus placed overt sins—sins involving external actions—as well as inner or mental sins, in the same list. Apparently for Jesus they were in the same category. Now, if the lower nature has to do with "animal passions and perverted human emotions" as Moore asserts, with what do sins such as pride and envy have to do? They certainly do not necessarily involve physical actions. They may be classified as sins of the heart—the mind. Furthermore, throughout Jesus' ministry He consistently condemned the prideful Pharisees, who, from all appearances were not committing sins involving physical actions, but were still likened to "whitened sepulchers" (Matthew 23:27, 28).

Unfortunately, in the unconverted person these control the higher nature. Through these, the human agent is under the control of the enemy and as a result human beings war against their Creator.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, when an individual surrenders to Christ, then the lower nature is placed under the Holy Spirit's control. Resultantly, the Spirit brings healing and restoration.²⁹⁷

Christ, unlike every other human being, was never "in the flesh" because He never surrendered to the "impulses of the lower nature."²⁹⁸ Moore also makes a distinction between a carnal nature and a sinful nature. He sees the former as "sinning flesh" and the latter as "sinful flesh." With that in view, he claims Christ did not have a carnal nature. Thus, from his perspective, it is incorrect to equate Christ's human birth with the new birth.²⁹⁹ Additionally, although taking upon Himself a sinful human nature, Christ did not inherit separation from God.³⁰⁰ This is because sin is not genetic. It is not a physical entity it, "involves reason and choice."³⁰¹ Additionally, sinful flesh by no means refers to actual sin because "flesh cannot sin." Human beings may be stimulated by the impulses of the flesh but those in and of themselves are not sin.³⁰²

²⁹⁶Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 148.

²⁹⁷Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 150.

²⁹⁸Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 153.

²⁹⁹Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 150, 151. We can see somewhat of a change in Moore's view as compared to what he had said earlier. Previously, he had placed the newborn believer in basically the same place where Jesus began (see Moore, *Adventist Cultures in Conflict*, 146). However, in this later work he moves away from such a claim.

³⁰⁰Moore, *Questions on Doctrine Revisited* (Ithaca, MI: AB Publishing, 2005), 69.

³⁰¹Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 151, 152.

³⁰²Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 154.

Nevertheless, Christ, by taking sinful flesh was impacted by it. However, even though He was “damaged” by the effects of sin, the “hereditary impulses of glands, nerves, and organs” could tempt, but “not contaminate His spiritual nature. His hatred of sin was absolute and His love for God supreme.”³⁰³ For this reason, Moore rejects the notion that Ellen White thought of Christ as having a human nature exactly like that of the rest of humanity. In his view, she spoke of Christ having *heredity* like the rest of humanity, but His *nature* was not exactly like the rest of humanity.³⁰⁴ Consequently, for Moore, when Christ assumed human nature, He assumed a physical-mental nature that was affected by sin but at the same time He assumed a prelapsarian spiritual nature.³⁰⁵

Section Summary

The period from the mid-1970s to the present has been, as we saw, the most animated in discussion of the human nature of Christ within Adventism. The diversity of points of view is indeed noteworthy. Thus, even though the Wieland and Short duo agrees with the Standish duo on the sinful nature of Christ, they differ with each other on both explanations and implications of the issue.³⁰⁶ Desmond Ford, on the other hand, claims a prelapsarian understanding. However, he is not strictly prelapsarian since he acknowledges that Jesus had less capacity than Adam before the fall. As such, he argues for a prelapsarian spiritual nature for Christ. Leroy Moore’s language is at times similar

³⁰³Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 151.

³⁰⁴Moore, *Questions on Doctrine Revisited*, 69.

³⁰⁵Moore, *Adventism in Conflict*, 146.

³⁰⁶For example, though outside the limits of this study, Wieland and Short believe in universal legal justification, but the Standish duo strenuously oppose this concept.

to that of Ford, and at times similar to the postlapsarians. Moore's mature view argues for a fallen lower nature and an unfallen higher nature. For him, Christ has the same heredity as the rest of humanity but not the same nature.

There remains within Adventism a divergence of views on the human nature of Christ. Often, similar or even identical terms may be employed, but the meaning and implications may be different. Since the death of Desmond Ford in 2019, there remain basically two streams of thought within Adventism on the humanity of Christ: (1) the postlapsarian stream, with its variations, and (2) the mediating position, including both Moore's variation and Heppenstall's, which most closely anticipates the later direction of the debate.

All of the authors considered above, use Ellen White's writings to some extent as a basis for their theology of Christ's human nature. The rest of the dissertation will analyze the views of Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden and their use of the writings of Ellen White on the human nature of Christ. Where do they and their use of Ellen White fit within the stream of Adventist interpretation? Chapter 3 will examine Douglass and his use of White's writings on the human nature of Christ.

CHAPTER 3

HERBERT DOUGLASS ON THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST

This chapter takes a comprehensive look at Herbert Douglass's views on the human nature of Christ—and especially his use of Ellen White's writings on that topic. Douglass connects the human nature of Christ to his soteriology, to the Harvest Principle—his theological legacy—which includes mission, and to last generation theology. Since Douglass has an integrated approach to his theology there are some areas of overlap among the different topics. However, I will endeavor to minimize repetition in areas where there are overlaps. The chapter begins with a brief biographical sketch of Douglass and then moves through his understanding of Christ's human nature, soteriology, the Harvest Principle, and last generation theology, to illuminate his contributions to the Adventist debate on the human nature of Christ?

Biographical Sketch of Herbert Edgar Douglass

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts on May 16, 1927, Herbert Edgar Douglass became a Seventh-day Adventist during his mid-teenage years. After matriculating at Atlantic Union College, Douglass began pastoral ministry in 1947. In 1953 he moved into the arena of academia by becoming a theology professor at Pacific Union College. It was during his time at Pacific Union College—1953 to 1960—that he was invited to help edit the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. In 1964 he earned a doctorate in theology from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. Douglass served the

Seventh-day Adventist Church in various capacities, including that of associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, until his death on December 14, 2014.¹ During his long career in ministry, Douglass distinguished himself as a prolific author. Within the numerous pages he has written, a central topic is the human nature of Christ.

Douglass on the Human Nature of Christ

In dealing with the doctrine of the incarnation, the central question for Douglass is not *how* God became man, but *why*. He acknowledges the mystery of the incarnation while assigning the aspect of mystery to the *how* of the incarnation and not the *why*.² To him, the why of the incarnation is abundantly clear. Humanity needed more than God on earth with some temporary change to some physical characteristics—humanity needed God to be *with us*. If God had come to the earth and lived a perfect life *as God*, that would have been routine for Him, while falling short of what humanity needed. Under such circumstances, even dying on the cross would have attracted only pity, but would not qualify for God incarnate to be both savior and example. In that regard, the real mystery of the incarnation is found in God manifest in sinful flesh—God manifest in the same “fallen condition” as the rest of humankind—yet living a sinless life.³

As regards the incarnation, its logic “is based on a mystery too profound for human analysis.” Since that is the case, any statements made relative to Jesus’ nature—

¹“Herbert E. Douglass, Leading Theologian and Author, Dead at 87,” <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/herbert-e.-douglass,-leading-theologian-and-author,-dead-at-87> (accessed July 11, 2017).

²Kenneth Gage, “What Human Nature Did Jesus Take? Fallen,” *Ministry*, June 1985, 10. In this article Douglass writes under the pseudonym Kenneth Gage.

³Herbert Douglass, “Emmanuel—God With Us,” *Review and Herald* December 20, 1973, 11, 12.

both His divine and human natures—should be made within the context of revelation.⁴ He considers a correct understanding of human nature and a correct understanding of Jesus’ human nature of utmost importance. To him, the entire plan of salvation is built upon Jesus’ living a victorious life in the same nature as every child of Adam since the fall.⁵ As regards Jesus’ human nature, to Douglass, our understanding of Christ’s humanity plays an integral role in “our own character development” and fitness for heaven. Thus, the study of His humanity is not to be left “to the area of the mysterious, as though God never meant for us to know why He became man.”⁶

By becoming human, Jesus’ life provided a demonstration⁷ of not only what God is like, but also what it means to be truly human.⁸ True humanity, it seems, comes from being able to live a sinless life—perfect performance—while in sinful flesh. To Douglass Jesus’ performance also serves to lift the hopes of believers.⁹ By becoming human and living with a sinful human nature, Jesus “demonstrated that the truly human person

⁴Herbert Douglass, “Jesus Showed Us the Possible,” *Review and Herald*, December 30, 1971, 14, 15.

⁵Douglass, “Why Jesus is Exalted,” *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1972, 13, 14.

⁶Herbert Douglass and Leo Van Dolson. *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity* (Nashville: Southern, 1977), 26, 27. In 1 Tim 3:16 Paul describes the incarnation as a mystery. If this text is to be taken at face value then the human nature of Christ is a mystery. The mystery of the incarnation lies in the fact that God became man.

⁷In Douglass’s writings, “demonstration” is an important word as regards what Jesus came to do. The next subsection looks at Jesus as an example and more light is shed on the subject there.

⁸Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 36. If Jesus had to have a sinful human nature in order to show what it means to be truly human then were Adam and Eve before the fall truly human?

⁹Douglass, “Meet the Man Who Makes Us Human” *Review and Herald*, November 13, 1975, 36. The title of this editorial could lead one to believe that Douglass had the Creation in mind. However, as we shall see, this is not so.

refuses to yield to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.” By falling into sin, Adam and Even allowed “spurious substitutes for human fulfilment” to cast a shadow over what it is to be truly human. Each time a person succumbs to the pull of “self-indulgence,” this shadow becomes even deeper. However, Jesus, through His exemplary life allows all “to see what the truly human was—in the noonday sun.” Jesus experienced real temptations from without and within. However, they did not lead to Him ever yielding, and by His victory He showed what the truly human is.¹⁰

Jesus knew the cost of becoming human was eternally high—the entire Godhead knew it. Jesus also knew that only by becoming human could He be “the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” Nevertheless, He entered the human race and experienced the “fullness of our humanity,” even to the point of death, so that He can “help us to be fully human.” Full humanity means “to be free from all that has dehumanized men and women since sin entered this planet.”¹¹ Through His own human life, Jesus demonstrated what true humanity really is and provided the example of how to achieve true humanity.¹² By showing us what it is to be truly human Jesus is the ultimate example.

Jesus: An Example

For Douglass, the example of Jesus holds high importance. Why? Because it is critical for struggling human beings to have an example of victorious living. In that

¹⁰Douglass, “Meet the Man Who Makes Us Human,” 37.

¹¹Douglass, “Meet the Man Who Makes Us Human,” 37.

¹²Through this concept of true humanity, Douglass is basically saying that since the fall, humanity is no longer fully human. And how is that so? Because human beings, since the fall, have lost the freedom to live victoriously above sin.

regard, just as Jesus, by depending upon the Holy Spirit, lived victoriously, so can we today. He cites Revelation 3:21 to support his argument. He also sees the New Testament as having a double emphasis—Jesus dying for sinful humanity and demonstrating to humans how they can allow the Holy Spirit to assist them in overcoming sin.¹³ Had Jesus lived a sinless life on another level than that of fallen humanity, there would not have been any relevance stemming from His example.¹⁴ But by becoming human, Jesus provided proof positive that it is possible for God’s grace to keep believers from sinning.¹⁵ Therefore, each believer needs to learn that the only route to victory over temptation is the one Jesus took—He placed His full reliance upon God for spiritual power.¹⁶ Douglass cites Ellen White in support of this postulation.¹⁷

Jesus Is an Example of Victory in Times of Temptation

For Douglass, since Jesus partook of sinful human nature, He was able to experience the full gamut of temptations other human beings experience and be

¹³Douglass, *A Fork in the Road: Questions on Doctrine; The Historic Adventist Divide of 1957*, (Coldwater, MI: Remnant Publications, 2008), xi, xii.

¹⁴Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 53, 54.

¹⁵Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 37.

¹⁶Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 52.

¹⁷See, Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898. “After the fall of man, Satan declared that human beings were proved to be incapable of keeping the law of God, and he sought to carry the universe with him in this belief. Satan’s words appeared to be true, and Christ came to unmask the deceiver. The Majesty of heaven undertook the cause of man, and with the same facilities that man may obtain, withstood the temptations of Satan as man must withstand them. This was the only way in which fallen man could become a partaker of the divine nature. In taking human nature, Christ was fitted to understand man’s trials and sorrows and all the temptations wherewith he is beset. Angels who were unacquainted with sin could not sympathize with man in his peculiar trials. Christ condescended to take man’s nature, and was tempted in all points like as we, that He might know how to succor all who should be tempted.”

victorious in each. Using Hebrews 4:15 and Ellen White statements,¹⁸ he postulates that Jesus experienced the temptations common to the rest of humanity. Thus, He experienced temptations from within, things such as “envy, self-exaltation, self-indulgence,” and from the outside,¹⁹ things such as “direct appeal through Satan or objects of unholy desire.” As a human being Jesus had to contend with self the same way each person has done since the fall because He possessed the “same heredity that tends to weaken human decision-making.”²⁰

Jesus’ life was not aloof from the struggles of the rest of the human family. Thus, it was necessary for Him to receive grace from God to empower Him to “endure loneliness, bitter hostility, and misunderstanding—as we all do.”²¹ Even though He was tempted in every area as we are tempted, yet still Jesus “resisted all appeals to self-exaltation or self-indulgence.” Furthermore, the Bible does not support the idea that “Jesus was protected from the clamor of humanity’s fallen nature, that He never did risk all in fighting the battle of faith as every son and daughter of Adam has to fight it.”²²

¹⁸Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 155: “Though He had all the strength of passion of humanity, never did He yield to temptation to do one single act which was not pure and elevating and ennobling.” White, “The Temptation of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875, 107. “Satan showed his knowledge of the weak points of the human heart, and put forth his utmost power to take advantage of the weakness of the humanity which Christ had assumed in order to overcome his temptations on man's account.”

¹⁹Douglass’ attempt at differentiating between temptations from within and without is highly commendable. He appears to associate temptations from within with things which can be identified as motives and motivations. However, he is not as clear with his association of temptations from the outside. It would have been highly commendable for him to provide at least the same level of specificity for temptations from the outside that he did for temptations from the inside.

²⁰Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 32, 33.

²¹Herbert Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2008), 32.

²²Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 33.

Since He was a human being, Jesus was not born obedient—He learned it (Hebrews 5:8 quoted). And because He learned obedience “He did not automatically, spontaneously, respond to all occasions, whether with men or face-to-face with Satan, with a heavenly built-in brain that could never fail, give in, or sin.”²³ From childhood into youth Jesus faced and conquered temptations.

Using an Ellen White article,²⁴ Douglass asserts that God in no way sheltered “Jesus from the thoughts and temptations that plague any growing boy or girl.”²⁵ Jesus, in His teenage years, was no exception to other teenagers. From his point of view “God did not ‘rig’ our Lord’s pathway through His teenage years by sheltering Him from the

²³Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 33.

²⁴“Jesus was interested in children. He did not step into our world a fully matured man. Had he done this, children would not have had his example to copy. Christ was a child; he had the experience of a child; he felt the disappointments ante trials that children feel; he knew the temptations of children and youth. But Christ was in his child life and youthful life an example to all children and youth. In childhood his hands were engaged in useful acts. In youth he worked at the carpenter's trade with his father, and was subject to his parents, thus giving in his life a lesson to all children and young. If Christ had never been a child himself, the youth might now think that he could not sympathize with them. But he lived their example, and all children and youth may find in Jesus one to whom they can carry all their griefs and all their disappointments, and in him they will find a friend who will help them.” Ellen White, “Parents in the Sabbath School,” *Signs of the Times*, June 23, 1881, 281.

²⁵Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 45. If indeed God did *not* shield Jesus from the “thoughts and temptations that plague any growing boy or girl,” then we can have a bit of a theological pickle. In Mark chapter seven Jesus addressed the issue of the things which spring from the inside of the person. In doing so He clearly showed that the things which stem from the inside defile a person. Jesus on many occasions condemned the religious leaders of the day because of their unrighteous thoughts—which were not always expressed in words or actions. That being said, if He had the same thoughts and temptations of any growing boy or girl, and growing boys and girls have some pretty unpleasant thoughts, then was He different from them—or by extension, from the religious leaders of His day?

On the other hand, there’s a difference between thoughts and temptations *suggested by satanic agencies* and thoughts and temptations *cherished*. I suspect Douglass has in mind *satanic suggestions* such as tempted Christ as well, according to Ellen White. “Some ... say ... My prayers are so mingled with evil thoughts that the Lord will not hear them. *These suggestions are from Satan. In His humanity Christ met and resisted this temptation* [Hebrews 5:7, quoted]. Many, not understanding that their doubts come from Satan, become fainthearted and are defeated in the conflict. Do not, because your thoughts are evil, cease to pray. *If we could in our own wisdom and strength pray aright, we could also live aright, and would need no atoning sacrifice. But imperfection is upon all humanity.* Ellen White, *Prayer*, 268-269, emphasis added.

normal thoughts and temptations that plague any growing boy or girl.”²⁶ To support his argument, he quotes four Ellen White sources.²⁷ Nevertheless, Jesus was victorious and since He lived His teenage life as a victor, Jesus is “willing to help young men and women to live theirs!” Through personal experience He understands the boy-girl stress the average “fully alive teenager feels today.”²⁸

²⁶Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 41.

²⁷The four sources are: (1) Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 71: “The life of Jesus was a life in harmony with God. While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him. Yet He was not exempt from temptation. The inhabitants of Nazareth were proverbial for their wickedness. The low estimate in which they were generally held is shown by Nathanael’s question, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” John 1:46. Jesus was placed where His character would be tested. It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity. He was subject to all the conflicts which we have to meet, that He might be an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood.” Ellen White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 4: 235.

(2) “Jesus was sinless and had no dread of the consequences of sin. With this exception His condition was as yours. You have not a difficulty that did not press with equal weight upon Him, not a sorrow that His heart has not experienced. His feelings could be hurt with neglect, with indifference of professed friends, as easily as yours. Is your path thorny? Christ’s was so in a tenfold sense. Are you distressed? So was He. How well fitted was Christ to be an example! Jesus was thirty years old before He entered His public ministry. The period of His childhood and youth was one of comparative obscurity, but of the highest importance. He was in this obscurity laying the foundation of a sound constitution and vigorous mind. He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit” (Luke 1:80). It is not as a man bending under the pressure of age that Jesus is revealed to us traversing the hills of Judea. He was in the strength of His manhood. Jesus once stood in age just where you now stand. Your circumstances, your cogitations at this period of your life, Jesus has had. He cannot overlook you at this critical period. He sees your dangers. He is acquainted with your temptations. He invites you to follow His example.”

(3) Ellen White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, August 23, 1894: “Jesus is the perfect pattern, and it is the duty and privilege of every child and youth to copy the pattern. Let children bear in mind that the child 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. He was able to resist the temptations of Satan through his dependence upon the divine power of his heavenly Father, as he was subject to his will, and obedient to all his commands. . . . It will please the Lord Jesus to have the children ask him for every spiritual grace, to bring all their perplexities and trials to the Saviour; for he knows how to help the children and youth, because he was a child himself, and was once subject to all the trials, disappointments, and perplexities to which children and youth are subject. God’s promise is given as much to children and youth as to those of more mature age. Whenever God has given a promise, let the children and youth turn it into a petition, and beg the Lord to do those things for them in their experience, that he did for Jesus, his only begotten Son, when in human necessity he looked to God, asking for the things which he needed.”

(4) Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, June 23, 1881, 281, fully cited in footnote 24 above.

²⁸Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 41.

When He became an adult Jesus continued to resist the temptations of the enemy and throughout His entire life never once sinned in thought or in action. He fought the battle with temptation in the same manner in which any person should, in the same arena, with the same nature and with the same resources.²⁹ Since Jesus was victorious over every temptation of the devil, He has proved that all human beings, through the same power He used, can live victorious over sin.³⁰ By so doing Jesus silenced all of the devil's accusations. Nonetheless, human beings have a strong tendency to make excuses for sin. In the process some try to avoid making Jesus too human in order that they may have excuses.³¹ According to Douglass, some, in an effort to excuse sin, go so far as to interpret the Bible to mean believers do not have to overcome sinning; they just have to *aim* at overcoming since they are incapable of overcoming. For Douglass, this manner of interpretation makes Jesus a Savior from sin, but not an example of victorious living.³²

Jesus, through His exemplary victorious life, teaches us that “a human being could stand up to Satan, regardless of how mean and furious and crafty he could be.”³³ Jesus' victorious living above temptations has another implication, namely, that He felt the full impact of temptation. According to Douglass, when one yields to temptation

²⁹Ellen. G. White, “Why Jesus is Exalted,” *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1972, 13, 14.

³⁰Of course, there is a difference. For us, the fallen nature is ours by birth before we have faith. We have to *learn* how to partake of the divine nature by faith (2 Peter 1:4). For Jesus, not only was the divine nature His by origin, but He was already living by faith *before* He voluntarily took on fallen human nature. So, He began the life of victory before had committed any sin. But we begin the life of faith with habits of sin already established.

³¹White, *The Jesus Difference*, 55.

³²White, “The Mediator's Twofold Role,” *Review and Herald*, October 30, 1975.

³³White, *The Jesus Difference*, 79.

he/she will not know how fierce it would have become had he/she not succumbed. It is only caused by the unmitigated tug of evil.”³⁴ However, Jesus never succumbed and amazingly, though possessing the same inherited weaknesses as the rest of humanity, He provided perfect resistance to Satan and never sinned—not even in one thought.³⁵ In the process Jesus lived the manner of life Satan said could not be lived—and had not been lived until He came.³⁶ The question is, If up until the incarnation no human being had lived the kind of life God desires of them, did Jesus have an advantage over the rest of humanity?

As Humanity’s Example Jesus Had No Advantage Over the Rest of Humanity

According to Douglass. During the incarnation there was nothing special about Jesus’ human nature giving Him an advantage over the rest of humanity. Many excuse their sins by claiming the limitations of their humanity. However, the same power available to Jesus is available to every believer since He had no advantage over them.³⁷ In his understanding the knowledge that Jesus did not come to earth encased in a protective bubble—with an advantage over the rest of humanity—filled Satan with glee since he

³⁴Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 32. Even though personal experience may not necessarily be the safest premise upon which to construct theology, I have a concern with this assertion and it is based upon my personal experience. There are many things I have been tempted to do but never gave assent. Most of them are actually repulsive to me and I have little or no desire to indulge in them. However, there are many things which I have done and, from my own experience I know that the lure of indulging in sinful habits I once entertained is much stronger than that of things I have never done. This does not mean I am saying Douglass is wrong with his assertion—it just says it does not hold true in my experience.

³⁵Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 81.

³⁶Douglass, “Why Jesus is Exalted,” *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1972, 13.

³⁷Herbert Douglass, “Meet the Man Who Makes Us Human,” 38.

knew that he had a 100% success rate with every other human being.³⁸ Quite unlike astronauts who go into space but need to wear special suits in order to survive there, Jesus came to this earth without any special suit for protection. Added to that, during the incarnation there was no break between Mary and Jesus; His humanity was as real as hers. With that being said, the burden of proof rests upon those who claim such a break existed and see Him as not taking “upon Himself the full liability of human nature as do all babies.”³⁹

Coming into the world in the same condition as all other babies, Jesus achieved the unprecedented—He broke the “power of sin” and created a “path for all to follow.” With no power available to Him that is not available to all, He conquered “every appeal to sin” and rose as the “mighty conqueror.”⁴⁰ Therefore, since He had no advantage over the rest of humanity, and since He accomplished the unprecedented, Jesus needed grace on a daily basis while He was on earth.⁴¹ Had Jesus possessed an advantage over the rest of humanity then that which He did would really be “playacting” thereby disqualifying Him to be Savior and example. However, He was victorious and thereby proved that God

³⁸Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 51.

³⁹Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 27, 28.

⁴⁰Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 31. However there is a significant difference between Jesus and all other human beings—He never sinned. And since He never sinned, He never had to deal with avoiding repeated sin or habitual sinning—every human being since Adam has faced that reality except Jesus. Interestingly enough, Douglass does not appear to give systematic treatment to the issue of habitual sinning as it relates to Jesus and the rest of humanity. In the work *Should We Ever Say, “I am Saved”?* he speaks about habits and how they are formed by giving a synopsis of the chemical reactions that takes place in the brain in order that habits may be formed. He had earlier made the connection between habits and character formation. In this piece he points out that habits, once formed, stay with a person. However, they can be overcome via cultivating new habits. Consequently, a person can develop a pattern of resistance to temptation when before defeat was inevitable. See, Herbert Douglass *Should We Ever Say, “I am Saved”?* 118-122.

⁴¹Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 57, 58.

can indeed be trusted and that He can keep human beings from sinning.⁴² Therefore, Jesus is humanity's sinless Savior, because He never chose to sin and not because of a birth advantage He had over the rest of humanity.⁴³ Now, if Jesus had no advantage over the rest of humanity did He have sinful passions and propensities?

Passions and Propensities

With regard to passions and propensities, Douglass perceives a distinction between *God-given* passions and propensities—which are not to be eliminated from the Christian's life—and the *evil* passions and propensities—which are to be eliminated from the Christian's life. The Christian is expected to keep the God-given passions and propensities until the resurrection or translation at the Second Coming.⁴⁴ Douglass appears to indicate that evil passions and propensities are a reality because of the human being's yielding to sin. To him, Jesus, by becoming human, had the heredity “weaknesses, passions, and propensities common to every human being.” However, by choice, Jesus never turned “those natural weaknesses, passions and propensities, into evil passions and propensities.” And how was Jesus able to accomplish this? He accomplished it by resistance, by never choosing to placate human desires and propensities, by relying upon reason and the work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

⁴²Douglass, “Meet the Man Who Makes Us Human,” 36.

⁴³Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 56.

⁴⁴Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 118.

⁴⁵Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 119.

For Douglass, then, a natural passion or propensity is not to be equated with an evil passion or propensity. In that regard, Jesus possessed all the natural passions of a human being but He never allowed these to develop outside of the will of God. He asserts that Jesus had no evil passions since He never sinned. At the same time, appeals were made to Him via “His natural passions to sin,”⁴⁶ since He received temptations “from within as from without.” Nevertheless, Jesus always decided to “satisfy His passions in a positive, constructive, God-approving way.”⁴⁷ Douglass provides further clarification on the issue of passions by linking it to the lower and higher natures. For him, Jesus’ higher nature, as that of the rest of humankind, included things such as choice and will whereas His lower nature encompassed things such as “normal human passions that seek selfish, indulgent ends.”⁴⁸

Although Douglass contends that Jesus had normal human passions, he sees Ellen White as portraying Jesus as never possessing some passions. Included among them are passions that are “vicious,” “perverted,” “murderous,” “hasty, lustful,” “bitter or baleful,” “corrupt,” “hellish,” “base,” “depraved,” and others of a similar nature. Jesus never had these passions because He never yielded Himself to daily temptation.⁴⁹ From this we can more clearly see the distinction Douglass makes between evil passions—which according to him Jesus never had—and normal passions—which according to him Jesus had.

⁴⁶Douglass, *Opportunity of the Century and How Adventists Missed it* (Highland, CA: Great Controversy, 2006), 33.

⁴⁷Douglass, *Opportunity of the Century* 33, 34.

⁴⁸Douglass, *Opportunity of the Century* 34. If by *passion* Douglass means *desire*, then is it that Jesus had desires to “seek selfish indulgent ends”? This appears to be a theological conundrum. It may appear that in seeking to extricate Jesus from evil passions, Douglass seems to implicate Him in them.

⁴⁹Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 117.

Regarding Ellen White and her use of words such as such as *inclinations*, *corruptions*, *passions*, and *propensities*, Douglass provided a level of examination of them in his work, *A Fork in the Road: Questions on Doctrine; The Historic Adventist Divide of 1957*.⁵⁰ He acknowledges Ellen White as using the words *passions* and *propensities* interchangeably and in three distinct contexts. In doing so she also demonstrates a difference between higher and lower passions. First, he sees her as using passions and propensities as God-given inclinations which are to be placed under the control of “reason and the Holy Spirit.” Second, he sees her as using passions and propensities as things which can be “misused by selfish, evil desires,” so they must be subject to crucifixion in order for them to be separated from the Christian’s life. Third, she uses these terms “to emphasize that complete victory” over every evil passion and propensity is a real possibility in the believer’s life.⁵¹

This section would not be complete without examining Douglass’ response to those within Adventism, such as Woodrow Whidden (whose works are examined in the following chapter), and who see Jesus as not possessing any sinful propensities. In Douglass’ understanding the so-called “third option”⁵² within Adventist Christology

⁵⁰He basically has headings and then quotations from Ellen White but he does not get into any detailed exposition. It may have been somewhat helpful for him to present a detailed exposition since by doing so he would have demonstrated his understanding of her usage of those terms. One of the major challenges faced within the debate on the humanity of Christ within Adventism is the nuances of particular words, phrases and statements. In the process, there is the great likelihood of two individuals using the same words, phrases, or statements while having opposite understandings of the same.

⁵¹Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 110, 111.

⁵²The positions of Edward Heppenstall, covered in chapter one above, as well as Woodrow Whidden, covered in the next chapter, are examples of the so-called third option within Adventist Christology relative to the human nature of Christ. One of the major points of contention between the postlapsarian camp and those who go for the “third option” within Adventist Christology is “The Baker Letter.” With that in mind, see below for Douglass’s treatment of it.

posits the view that Christ did not have any “‘tendency to sin’ or ‘sinful propensities.’” Douglass believes that Jesus’ purpose in the incarnation was not to “liberate humanity from our ‘innocent infirmities’⁵³ but to deliver us from indwelling sin.” Douglass also sees Ellen White as showing a distinction between “inherent propensities” and “evil propensities.” He defines propensities as “a tendency, a bent, an enticement to temptation.” However, if one resists that temptation it is not sin. He then states that they only become “evil” or “sinful propensities” after one has yielded to temptation. He uses the same line of logic as regards “evil tendencies” and “evil propensities.”⁵⁴

As Douglass sees it, the strongest and “strangest” argument in favor of the third option is the comparison between Ellen White and Henry Melvill.⁵⁵ To him, Ellen White

⁵³The concept of “innocent infirmities” in relation to the human nature of Christ was most likely introduced by Tim Poirier. In his December 1989 *Ministry* article “Sources Clarify Ellen White’s Christology” he shows similarities between the writings of Ellen White and Henry Melvill. Poirier points out that Ellen White made frequent borrowing from Melvill. In one of his sermons, “The Humiliation of the man Christ Jesus,” Melvill made a digression to consider Jesus’ humanity. For Melvill, the Fall brought “two primary consequences” to humanity; “sinful propensities” and “innocent infirmities.” Melvill understood innocent infirmities to mean those consequences of sin that are not in and of themselves sinful. By sinful propensities he had in mind a tendency or proneness to sin. Prior to the Fall Adam and Eve had neither of them. After the Fall, they, and their posterity, had both. Jesus, on the other hand, had innocent infirmities but not sinful tendencies. Thus, according to Melvill, Jesus was neither completely prelapsarian nor postlapsarian. Poirier sees a certain level of correspondence between Ellen White’s usage of terms such as propensities and tendencies and that of Melvill.

In the same article Poirier also compares the language employed by Ellen White to that of Octavius Winslow. Winslow’s book, *The Glory of the Redeemer*, which White had in her library, contained similar expressions to White’s in speaking of the human nature of Christ. Poirier concludes that White understood the terms tendency, propensity and liability in the same manner as Winslow. See Tim Poirier, “Sources Clarify Ellen White’s Christology,” *Ministry*, December 1989.

⁵⁴Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 58. It is interesting to note his shift from “sinful propensities”—the position of the so-called ‘third option’ in Adventist Christology—to “inherent propensities”—his understanding of Ellen White’s position. Furthermore, when he gets back to “sinful propensities” he identifies them as coming as a result of yielding to temptation. This conclusion has the ability to lead to at least two conclusions. First, the ‘third option’ correctly interprets Ellen White when it states that Christ had no “sinful propensities.” Second, that his definition on “sinful propensities” is not the same as that of the ‘third option.’

⁵⁵Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 58, 59.

indeed borrowed the phraseologies of other authors, even Melvill,⁵⁶ but at the same time she did not borrow their theologies.⁵⁷ He says so in light of the fact that he considers Melvill a federalist⁵⁸ and as such his Christology and soteriology would have been heavily influenced by his federalist thinking. He links Melvill with Augustine's understanding of the fall which, in his understanding, means the entire human race is "inherently depraved and sinful *because* we all sinned in Adam." As a consequence of sinning in Adam, "God holds *all mankind* responsible for the violation" of His covenant with Adam. Douglass continues, "imputation of sin cannot precede and thus account for corruption; corruption is the result of a choice to sin, not the cause of it."⁵⁹

Returning to his perspective on the "third option," he considers the comparison between White and Melvill a good attempt, but he believes it fails because Melvill was "burdened with his Calvinistic presuppositions."⁶⁰ Douglass also acknowledges

⁵⁶<http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search2016.pl?sur=&suro=w&fir=&firo=c&cit=&cito=c&c=all&z=all&tex=MLVL817H&sye=&eye=&col=all&maxcount=50> (accessed March 21, 2019). Henry Melvill was a nineteenth-century Anglican pastor who served as chaplain to Queen Victoria and was considered "the most popular preacher in London and one of the greatest rhetoricians of his time."

⁵⁷Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 61. It should be noted that Douglass considers Ellen White to be "this world's clearest expositor of what the Bible writers meant, and still mean, for Christians today." See Douglass, *The End: The Unique Voice of Adventists About the Return of Jesus*, (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2001), 147. Herein after referred to by the shortened title *The End*.

⁵⁸Federalism stems from an understanding that Adam was the federal (representative) head of humanity. When he sinned in Eden, all his posterity was implicated with him and the consequences of sin have been passed to them. Christ, by His incarnation, became the new federal head of humanity. Due to Christ's righteous life and redemptive work, human beings can now be liberated from the curse of sin. The main biblical basis for federalism is Romans 5:12-19. See Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 208-211.

⁵⁹Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 60, emphasis his.

⁶⁰Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 59, emphasis his.

similarities in phraseology between Ellen White and Octavius Winslow,⁶¹ but considers it strange for Adventists to base an argument on those similarities. He notes that Ellen White never used the phrase “innocent infirmities.”⁶² Thus Douglass dismisses the comparison argument. But what about “The Baker Letter?”⁶³ How does he treat it?

Although it can be seen as a source of clarity with regard to Ellen White on the human nature of Christ, “The Baker Letter”⁶⁴ has been subject to interpretation. With that

⁶¹<https://www.monergism.com/works-octavius-winslow> (accessed March 21, 2019). Octavius Winslow was one of the more prominent evangelical preachers in 19th century England and America. Although a Baptist for most of his pastoral life, in the last decade of his life he left the Baptist Church and became an Anglican pastor. His writings are known for their Christ-centeredness and deep devotion.

⁶²Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 58, 59.

⁶³See, Arthur L. White, “Introductory Statement to Manuscript Release #414,” *Manuscript Releases* 21 vols. (Washington, DC: White Estate, 1993), 13:13. William L. H. Baker was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and evangelist who worked both in the United States and Australia. During Ellen White’s time in Australia (1891-1901) she wrote a lengthy letter to both him and his wife. The main thrust of the letter was an appeal for him to be more efficient in his pastoral and evangelistic work. However, the letter also contains five paragraphs pertinent to the human nature of Christ. This letter, which did not come to prominence until the 1950s, has had a profound impact upon the Adventist Christological landscape from then—the 1950s—to the present day. For more information see, George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 121-125; Jean. Zurcher, *Touched With Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1999), 163-165; R. Larson, *The Word Made Flesh: One Hundred Years of Seventh-day Adventist Christology, 1852-1952* (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 1986), 66-154; A. L. Moore, *Theology in Crisis* (Corpus Christi, TX: Life Seminars, 1980), 258-271; A. Leroy. Moore, *Adventism in Conflict* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1995), 145-157; Eric C. Webster, *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1984), 129-133; Roy Adams, *The Nature of Christ: Help for a Church Divided Over Perfection* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1994), 70-72.

⁶⁴See, Ellen White, “Lt. 8, 1895,” *Manuscript Releases* (Washington, DC: White Estate, 1993), 13:18-20. “Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin, his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.”

“Bro. Baker, avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of

in mind, Herbert Douglass has his own interpretation of it. He disagrees with the use of “The Baker Letter” to explain Ellen White’s thought on the human nature of Christ. For him, it is better to use the numerous statements she made on the topic to explain “The Baker Letter” and not the other way around. In that regard he questions the hermeneutics of those who use “The Baker Letter” to explain Ellen White’s statements on Christ’s humanity.⁶⁵ From his perspective, Adventists would be better served if they read Ellen White with the intent of understanding what she was saying to Baker⁶⁶ rather than as an interpretative tool. Proper hermeneutics, according to Douglass, “requires us to define the few obscure passages by means of the heavy weight of those which are clearer—especially those in her expositions of the subject,” as found in books such as *The Desire*

God; for, said the angel, “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Highest; and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his Father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

“These words are not addressed to any human being, except to the Son of the Infinite God. Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called that holy thing. It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves: for it cannot be. The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know. We are to keep our feet on the rock, Christ Jesus, as God revealed in humanity.”

“I perceive that there is danger in approaching subjects which dwell on the humanity of the Son of the infinite God. He did humble Himself when He saw He was in fashion as a man, that He might understand the force of all temptations wherewith man is beset.”

“The first Adam fell: the second Adam held fast to God and His word under the most trying circumstances, and His faith in His Father’s goodness, mercy, and love did not waver for one moment. “It is written” was His weapon of resistance, and it is the sword of the Spirit which every human being is to use. “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”—nothing to respond to temptation. Not one occasion has been given in response to His manifold temptations. Not once did Christ step on Satan’s ground, to give him any advantage. Satan found nothing in Him to encourage his advances.”

⁶⁵Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 57.

⁶⁶Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 58, 59.

of Ages, rather than from “a letter in passing when we do not know the circumstances of the letter reader.”⁶⁷ Thus, for Douglass, the “Baker Letter” is not properly utilized by those who use it to interpret Ellen White’s writings on the humanity of Christ.

Douglass believes that when Ellen White told Baker to be “careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ,” she was concerned with two errors. On the one hand she was concerned with the tendency of some, who wanted to emphasize Christ as example, but appropriated to Him evil propensities as those common to all who have sinned. At the same time, she was concerned with those who appeared to portray Him as meeting “temptation in some manner not common to other fellow beings” and, in the process destroying “the completeness of His humanity and His effectiveness as man’s understanding High Priest and realistic example.”⁶⁸

From Douglass’ point of view neither the appeal to the similar phraseologies between Ellen White and Henry Melvill, nor the appeal to the “Baker Letter,” demonstrates that Ellen White saw Jesus as coming to earth with anything but a postlapsarian human nature. One of the reasons he places such high emphasis upon the necessity of Jesus having a postlapsarian human nature is the issue of the vindication of God.

The Human Nature of Christ and the Vindication of God

Douglass believes there are many reasons for the incarnation. However, the most important of them all has to do with Satan’s charge that God’s law can never be kept by

⁶⁷Douglass, “Letter to Eric Webster,” 6.

⁶⁸Herbert Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, (Nashville: Southern Publishing Company, 1975), 38.

human beings in any time of human history. He quotes White in the book *Education* pages 73-74⁶⁹ to support his assertion⁷⁰ that, by becoming human, God denied Satan's claim that it was not possible for any beings, sinless or sinful, to obey His law.⁷¹ For this reason, it was important, as mentioned above, for Christ to have no advantage over the rest of fallen humanity. Because, if Christ had some special power in His nature to which every other human being does not have access, then Satan would have used such against God.⁷²

By steadfastly obeying God's commandments, and that out of His own volition, Christ proved that God will not request of human beings something which He will not do. Furthermore, Christ vindicated God's fairness since, through dependence upon the Holy Spirit, He rendered perfect obedience to all of God's requirements. Through His

⁶⁹Ellen White, *Education*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 73-74. "Through Christ had been communicated every ray of divine light that had ever reached our fallen world. It was He who had spoken through everyone that throughout the ages had declared God's word to man. Of Him all the excellences manifest in the earth's greatest and noblest souls were reflections. The purity and beneficence of Joseph, the faith and meekness and long-suffering of Moses, the steadfastness of Elisha, the noble integrity and firmness of Daniel, the ardor and self-sacrifice of Paul, the mental and spiritual power manifest in all these men, and in all others who had ever dwelt on the earth, were but gleams from the shining of His glory. In Him was found the perfect ideal."

"To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become--for this, Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven."

⁷⁰Douglass, *The End*, 134.

⁷¹Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus: The Benchmark of Humanity*, 37.

⁷²Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus: The Benchmark of Humanity*, 40.

obedience Jesus defeated Satan's accusations against God and His law.⁷³ Supported by citations from Ellen White passages in *Patriarchs and Prophets*,⁷⁴ *Desire of Ages*,⁷⁵ and

⁷³Douglass, *The End*, 134, 135.

⁷⁴Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (original 1890; reprint: Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 68-70. "But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin."

"From the first the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, that His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. In attacking the law, he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author. In the controversy it was to be shown whether the divine statutes were defective and subject to change, or perfect and immutable."

⁷⁵See Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 24, 761, 762. Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see "God with us."

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Hebrews 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are." Hebrews 4:15. He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God."

... "By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey."

... "Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken."

"Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man, as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve."

Signs of the Times,⁷⁶ Douglass opines that, through the incarnation, God vindicated His “character by demonstrating that He not only demanded self-denial and self-sacrifice on the part of created beings, but that He also manifested in Himself these aspects of genuine love as the very foundation of His government.”⁷⁷

Notwithstanding what Jesus has accomplished, Douglass understands the vindication of God has more than one phase. Phase one of God’s vindication was accomplished by Jesus’ life and death.⁷⁸ The second phase is accomplished by God’s church. To Douglass, the ultimate privilege of the Christian is to partner with Christ in the vindication of God’s character. The believer, especially in the last days, is to develop a character akin to biblical giants such as Enoch and Daniel. It is only after the final generation of believers have developed such a character, that Christ will return. Thus far, God has been restraining the seven last plagues because He does not yet have a generation of “loyalists [who are] worthy of His seal of approval.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶See Ellen White, “Tempted in all Points Like as we are,” *Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898. “After the fall of man, Satan declared that human beings were proved incapable of keeping the law of God, and he sought to carry the universe with him in this belief. Satan’s words appeared to be true, and Christ came to unmask the deceiver. The Majesty of heaven undertook the cause of man, and with the same facilities that man may obtain, withstood the temptations of Satan as man must withstand them. This was the only way in which fallen man could become a partaker of the divine nature. In taking human nature, Christ was fitted to understand men’s trials and sorrows and all the temptations wherewith he is beset. Angels who were unacquainted with sin could not sympathize with man in his peculiar trials. Christ condescended to take man’s nature, and was tempted in all points like as we, that He might know how to succor all who should be tempted.”

⁷⁷Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus: The Benchmark of Humanity*, 36.

⁷⁸Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 110, 111. Here he presents a modification to Andreasen. Andreasen presents Jesus as vindicating God but does not identify it as a process. Rather, he argues for a God needing at least one person to demonstrate the power of the work of the gospel. He then identifies that One as Jesus but then goes on to argue that Jesus’ work did not bring about the complete defeat of Satan. See the section on Andreasen in chapter one above.

⁷⁹Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 110, 111. The second aspect of the vindication of God—that accomplished by the last generation—is addressed below.

This second phase is important for Douglass because, apparently, Calvary “did not clear up” everything involved in the Great Controversy, and there remained “some lingering questions in the minds of unfallen beings.” Therefore, God decided to use more time and a broader demonstration in order that all the principles involved in the controversy could be revealed in a fuller manner.⁸⁰ Based on Douglass’s understanding, even though what Jesus did, eternally anchored the plan of salvation, it apparently did not forever settle the full controversy between Christ and Satan. In that regard, more seems to be needed before God could close human probation.⁸¹

To Douglass, God is willing to take a further risk of His reputation. This time, those who follow Christ will provide even more answers to Satan’s charges regarding obedience to God’s law. Thus, “in God’s scheme, such a vindication would supply the indisputable evidence⁸² that God has not asked too much from His created beings” and forever settle the question “whether love and unselfish service is the best way to find self-fulfillment and peace amidst all the options that have been tossed up for grabs” in the controversy between God and the devil. Added to that, since the Holy Spirit works to bring to full maturity Christian character, and since through the indwelling power of the

⁸⁰Douglass, *The End*, 136.

⁸¹In the book *God at Risk: The Cost of Freedom in the Great Controversy Between God and Satan*, Douglass indicates that through His death Christ “shut Satan’s mouth regarding the fairness, justice, and utter self-denying love of God.” It also “satisfied any question in anyone’s mind, among angels or unfallen worlds, as to whether God was fair and just in dealing with sin.” This position leads one to pose questions as regards the necessity of the last generation and its role in the vindication of God. See Herbert Douglass, *God at Risk: The Cost of Freedom in the Great Controversy Between God and Satan*, (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2004), 99.

⁸²Evidently Douglass did not think that what Jesus did by His life and death can be disputed by Satan—because Douglass spends considerable time amplifying the necessity of Jesus’ incarnation in sinful human nature so as to silence Satan’s arguments—his “indisputable evidence” claim could imply that. It

Holy Spirit the believer can live a victorious life, the character of Jesus will be reproduced in believers who depend upon the working of the Spirit.⁸³

The reproduction of Jesus' character in the lives of His followers has an additional aspect to it. Following the lead of A. T. Jones and others,⁸⁴ Douglass sees a connection between the sanctuary doctrine—the cleansing of the sanctuary—and the cleansing of the individual believer. He also asserts that this connection has been recognized by Adventist writers for many years. He believes the sanctuary doctrine helps to provide an explanation as to why the development of people who demonstrate to the world the power of the gospel is so critical to God's salvation plan. Furthermore, the sanctuary doctrine brings to the fore the fact that since 1844 “something special is required of God's followers in terms of character development that may not have been so crucial to the development of the church heretofore.”⁸⁵

There are, according to Douglass, two reasons for this requirement: first, it is only after the people of God have the kind of character described in Revelation 14:12 that Jesus can complete His role as High Priest. Second, in order for God's honor to be vindicated and “His government cleared of Satan's accusations” there must first be a people who are cleansed from sin and who reflect Jesus' image. Through their display of

could also imply that what Jesus did was insufficient, at best, or inferior, at worst, in settling the Great Controversy.

⁸³Douglass, *The End*, 135.

⁸⁴For a discussion on A. T. Jones and the sanctuary doctrine as it relates to Christian perfection, see chapter two above.

⁸⁵Douglass, *The End*, 136.

consistent Christian character, there will be irrefutable proof that God’s law is fair and that He offers “freedom and love when He asked for [human] obedience.”⁸⁶

Referencing Ellen White in an article in *Review and Herald*, November 23, 1905,⁸⁷ Douglass makes the point that only after God’s people have had their characters prepared can they present a credible witness to the world. To him, when this becomes a reality the church will experience maximum effectiveness.⁸⁸ Therefore, from both a personal and an institutional level, the “highest priority” of Adventism is “to reveal to the world...the glory of God’s character, and thus to vindicate His government.”⁸⁹ This is of utmost importance, because the “highest privilege” of the Christian is found in joining with Jesus in vindicating God’s character. Such a recognition will result in one’s religious experience being turned upside down.⁹⁰

Section Summary

This section examined the importance of Christ being incarnate in sinful human nature. According to Douglass, Jesus’ godly life was an example—if not the ultimate

⁸⁶Douglass, *The End*, 136, 137.

⁸⁷See Ellen White, “The Time of the End,” *Review and Herald*, November 23, 1905, par. 6, 7. “God’s people should make mighty intercession to him for help now. And they must put their whole energies into the effort to proclaim the truth during the respite that has been granted. As they consecrate themselves unreservedly to God’s service, a convincing power will attend their efforts to present the truth to others, and light will shine into many hearts. My brethren and sisters, sleep no longer on Satan’s enchanted ground, but arouse, and call into requisition every resource for the proclamation of the message of mercy. The last warning is to be given “before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

⁸⁸Douglass, *The End*, 142.

⁸⁹Douglass, *The End*, 145.

⁹⁰Douglass, *God at Risk: The Cost of Freedom in the Great Controversy Between God and Satan*, (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2004), 114.

example—of victorious living. He demonstrated real humanity and overcame the temptations of the devil even though He had no advantage over the rest of the human family. Douglass believes Jesus had natural passions but not sinful passions. Natural passions can only become sinful after one has yielded to temptation and perverted the purpose for which they were given. Jesus incarnation was for the purpose of saving humanity from indwelling sin; hence He could not simply identify with humanity by sharing so-called innocent infirmities. Ultimately, through His victorious life and sacrificial death Jesus vindicated God. Nevertheless, there is yet another phase in the vindication of God and it is found through His people. By following Jesus' example—through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—God's people on earth will live in a manner that will silence Satan's claims regarding the ability of anyone—whether fallen or unfallen—to keep God's law.

Therefore, since Jesus came into the world with a sinful human nature does that mean He too needed saving? That is a soteriological question—and the incarnation is a soteriological issue; thus the focus of this work now turns to Douglass's soteriology.

Douglass on Soteriology

Because of the importance of Soteriology within Christian theology, whenever any aspect of Christology comes to the fore, there are deep soteriological implications. Soteriological discussions within Adventism tend to include the understanding of righteousness by faith, the presentation of righteousness by faith at the 1888 General Conference Session and its implications, and the issue of perfection. Having said that, what is Douglass's view of righteousness by faith?

Douglass on Righteousness by Faith

Douglass defines “righteousness by faith” as the restoration of God’s image in humankind—reflecting Christ’s character.⁹¹ He argues that Ellen White in *Testimonies to Ministers*, 91-92,⁹² set forth the distinctive Adventist understanding of righteousness by faith. Because this emphasis has twin foci—the righteousness of Christ and obedience to His commandments—it was “light years ahead” of the Protestant Reformers.⁹³ In these twin foci, the new birth is “an event and a process.” Therefore, the new birth implies growth.⁹⁴ Seeing that, in his view, righteousness by faith is both “an event and a process,” adds a significant nuance to his understanding of salvation.

Douglass likens salvation to healing. Though he did not reference a Greek lexicon, he asserts that the Greek verb *sōzō* can mean “to heal” as well as “to save.”⁹⁵ Therefore, Jesus saves as well as heals the believer. As a result, the things damaged by sin; whether “physically, mentally, emotionally, socially or spiritually” will be restored as

⁹¹Douglass, *God at Risk*, 120.

⁹²Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 91-92. “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”

⁹³Douglass, *God at Risk*, 165, 166.

⁹⁴Douglass, *God at Risk*, 132.

⁹⁵Douglass, *God at Risk*, 118n320.

long as the Healer is given the opportunity to do His work.⁹⁶ Since Jesus is Savior as well as Healer, it was important for Him to be incarnate in sinful human nature. Douglass sees the presentation of righteousness by faith at the 1888 General Conference Session as bringing these important connections back into focus.

For Douglass, the essence of the 1888 message provides the believer with the basics for living a Christian life. It also brought the nearness of Jesus—His taking of fallen human nature just as our own—back into focus.⁹⁷ With regard to the 1888 General Conference Session, Douglass believes that legalism was literally crucified by E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.⁹⁸ At the same time, the message they presented was much more than that which was presented by the Protestant Reformers.⁹⁹ Later, in a note related to the 1888 General Conference Session, he opines that the message brought by Waggoner, Jones, and Ellen White “recovered lost or compromised biblical truths.” The message presented was not simply a “recovery of Protestant Reformation theology.”¹⁰⁰

In summary, Douglass considers righteousness by faith to be an act and a process. This understanding of righteousness by faith was, apparently, lost for many years but was

⁹⁶Douglass, *God at Risk*, 118, 119. Douglass in this instance is actually likening healing to sanctification. This is evident in his comparison between saving, likened to the work of God for the sinner, and healing, the work of God in the believer. As will be demonstrated below, Douglass’ perspective on justification is somewhat interesting.

⁹⁷Douglass, *God at Risk*, 167.

⁹⁸Chapter two above provided some insights into the teachings of these two on the human nature of Christ and to a lesser extent their soteriology.

⁹⁹Hence his reference to Ellen White in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 91, 92, quoted above.

¹⁰⁰Douglass, *God at Risk*, 164.

recovered and presented by E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones at the 1888 General Conference Session. Ellen White also played a part in its presentation, and her message had two foci—the righteousness of Jesus, and obedience to the commandments of God. Having said that, salvation makes sense only within the context of that from which one is saved—sin. How does Douglass view sin?

Douglass on Sin

Douglass has a somewhat relational understanding of sin. He tends to view it as a “blighted relationship [with God] that can be healed¹⁰¹ by faithful, loyal cooperation with the grace of God.”¹⁰² Relationship to God is based upon trust. Sin is lack of trust in God, the opposite of faith in God. At its center, sin does not trust God and argues against His will.¹⁰³ He contends that neither the Bible nor the writings of Ellen White envisages sin as something humans inherited. On the contrary, “sin is an act of the will, a yielding to temptation.”¹⁰⁴ Based upon that definition, one may be inclined to think Douglass has too much of an act-oriented understanding of sin. However, he supports his position by quoting Ellen White: “[Seth] was a son of Adam, like sinful Cain, and inherited from the nature of Adam no more natural goodness than did Cain. He was born in sin, but by the grace of God, in receiving the faithful instruction of his father Adam, he honored the

¹⁰¹As has been demonstrated above, Douglass has a somewhat therapeutic understanding of salvation. This can be seen in his understanding of sin.

¹⁰² Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus: The Benchmark of Humanity*, 29.

¹⁰³Douglass, “Truth Understood Only by Men of Faith,” *Review and Herald*, June 20, 1974, 675.

¹⁰⁴Douglass, “Letter to Eric Webster,” 25.

Lord in doing his will.”¹⁰⁵ Douglass contends that according to White, Seth inherited the weaknesses of sin’s consequences. However, he overcame them from the inside as well as the outside.¹⁰⁶

Douglass asserts that sin will continue to exist within the world “until the last rebel thought is eliminated.” When all human beings have made their final decisions, to say either yes or no to God’s way of doing things, their lifestyle choices will make abundantly clear who are on God’s side and who are not. In the final analysis, it will be demonstrated that God has a “plan whereby the spirit of sin can be defeated.”¹⁰⁷ Therefore, sin, and sinners, will not last forever. But how does one move from being in a lost condition to being saved? That is a faith transaction.

Douglass on Faith

For Douglass, faith and sin are polar opposites. Whereas sinners continue to distrust God and remain in a rebellious broken relationship with Him, people of faith trust and offer willing obedience to Him.¹⁰⁸ Douglass has more of an active, rather than passive, understanding of faith. To him faith is not limited to a “passive acceptance of God’s mercies, but is an active response to His provision of power to produce the works

¹⁰⁵Ellen White, in *Signs of the Times*, February 20, 1879, par. 1.

¹⁰⁶Douglass, “Letter to Eric Webster,” 24. Douglass’ conceptualization of sin seems to suggest that one is a sinner because he/she sins. If that is indeed the case, then theoretically, at the least, there are, and have been persons, who lived sinless lives—apart from Jesus. There are, for example, persons who have been born with mental disabilities that make them incapable of moral accountability. Do such persons need a Savior—seeing that they have not knowingly chosen to sin?

¹⁰⁷Douglass, “Why God is Urgent—And Yet Waits,” *Review and Herald*, May 16, 1974, 553.

¹⁰⁸Douglass, *Faith: Saying Yes to God* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 39.

of love.”¹⁰⁹ Thus he asserts that biblical faith describes the person who chooses to believe, trust, and obey God. Furthermore, even though biblical faith involves the intellect, will, and commitment, it is not any of them alone.¹¹⁰

He argues, however, that our understanding of faith is somewhat limited by the way the word is used in our English Bibles as well as its treatment in other languages.¹¹¹ The Greek word *pistis*, which is a noun, and *pisteuein*, which is a verb, are separated both in English and other languages. In Latin the Greek noun *pistis* is translated as *fides*. Its verbal counterpart is *credere*. In French the Greek noun *pistis* is rendered *foi*, but the cognate verb is *croire*. Douglass sees this “cleavage between the noun and verb” as resulting in “profound misunderstanding of the New Testament concept of faith.” Why? In Latin *credere* means “to give credit to a doctrine” even though the individual may have no personal relationship to the doctrine. A similar thing happens with the French word *croire*. In the process the New Testament concept of faith is wrested from its original meaning and “something perverse and alien” happens to it.¹¹²

According to Douglass, there no distinction between the word “faith” as a noun and a verb. Those who have faith (the noun), act with faith (the verb). As a consequence, people of faith act in accordance with God’s plans, because they always want to please Him.¹¹³ His understanding of faith and how it works is best seen in the way he connects

¹⁰⁹Douglass, *Faith: Saying Yes to God*, 60.

¹¹⁰Douglass, *Faith: Saying Yes to God*, 33.

¹¹¹Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 21-25.

¹¹²Douglass, “Faith is More than Belief,” *Review and Herald*, March 6, 1975, 260.

¹¹³Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus*, 13-16.

grace and faith. He views grace as something that has been benevolently provided by God in order that human beings may be saved. However, salvation also entails faith. Thus, by faith, the human being can accept the grace of God and be saved. This faith is a response to God's grace and individuals "appropriate to themselves the help¹¹⁴ that grace offers."¹¹⁵

Faith involves the believer's response. And, "even though faith is prompted by God, faith is not God's work but ours—the human response to God's call for men and women to represent Him in proving Satan wrong."¹¹⁶ In order to prove Satan wrong, believers must exercise biblical faith. Biblical faith is demonstrated "in the world of being and doing." Thus, biblical faith means one becomes a living testimony. In turn, "living faith is living as Jesus did. Living faith develops the character of Jesus. Reflecting the character of Jesus is the aim of faith."¹¹⁷

An apt illustration of what faith can do is found in the contrast between Jesus and His disciples in the stilling of the storm on the lake. Douglass points out that when Jesus calmed the storm on the lake He did so "with the same human liabilities shared by the

¹¹⁴The idea of grace offering the sinner "help" can lead one to wonder if some persons need more help from grace than others—and if some need any at all.

¹¹⁵Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus*, 28. Douglass appears to present a synergism with regard to salvation. However, this synergism seems to place a bit more responsibility upon the human respondent than the Bible apparently does. While it is true that we are to respond to God's invitation to accept His grace by faith, however, even this faith is a gift of God. In that light, then, the human faith response is not done independent of God. So, Douglass tends to appear to elevate the human response to a higher level than the Bible does.

¹¹⁶Douglass, *Should We Ever Say, "I am Saved"?* 70. This assertion, which is consistent with his line of argumentation in this work, makes faith an active thing and not just passive. Furthermore, it tends to place a bit more focus upon the human response in faith than upon God granting to everyone "the measure of faith."

¹¹⁷Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 46, 47.

others in the boat. However, he had to rebuke His disciples' lack of faith. Just as Jesus rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith, so today He rebukes His followers for believing that it is not possible for them to be like Him. Those who believe that they cannot be like Him actually place a low estimate upon His grace and fail to realize what they can do when they cooperate with Him.¹¹⁸

Those believers who live in the last days of earth's history are enjoined to exercise the same kind of faith as Jesus did. Douglass call this type of faith the faith of Jesus. Douglass understands the faith of Jesus to be exhibited by God's last day people. The faith they have is greater than the faith of Abraham and Moses because they will have the faith of Jesus.¹¹⁹ And why is it necessary to have this kind of faith in the last days? Because only the faith of Jesus is capable of standing against the devil's last-days assaults.¹²⁰

The faith of Jesus, according to Douglass, is also something which believers are required to keep—especially the final generation¹²¹ of Christians living immediately prior to the return of Christ. That generation of believers will, through their lives, demonstrate true biblical faith—which is “more than a high-sounding, emotionally packed word.” That generation will clearly show that faith is not just an important element in the Christian's life but *the* factor which differentiates between the nominal church member and the truly converted Christian. In addition, Douglass also asserts two salient points.

¹¹⁸Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 8, 9.

¹¹⁹Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus*, 5.

¹²⁰Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 13.

¹²¹Douglass' understanding of final generation theology is discussed below.

First, it is not possible to have a correct understanding of righteousness by faith without first having a correct understanding of faith. Second, an individual's eternal destiny is determined by understanding and experiencing righteousness by faith.¹²²

What, then, does righteousness by faith entail in Douglass' soteriology? Does it include justification, sanctification and glorification? Is there any space for perfection?

Douglass on Justification

Douglass identifies three salient aspects of soteriology. First, character determines the believer's destiny. Second, perfection is moral growth. Third, there is a link between the human will and God's grace in Christian growth.¹²³ He sees twin truths in the gospel—Jesus' work for the believer and Jesus' work in the believer. For him, it is important to hold them both in proper perspective. In a note on the twin foci of the gospel he talks about an ellipse of truth. In this understanding, the twin foci of truth must both be kept in focus in order to function properly. With that in mind, the gospel ellipse involves pardon for sin and power to live above sin; it involves Christ as substitute and Christ as example; it also takes in Christ's work on the cross and His work in the sanctuary.¹²⁴

In Douglass' soteriology, justification is equated with pardon¹²⁵ and the new birth.¹²⁶ Now, even though Jesus died for everyone, God does not pardon everyone—only

¹²²Douglass "Faith, the Key to the "Last Generation,"" *Review and Herald*, April 17, 1975, 425, 426.

¹²³Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 42.

¹²⁴Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 20, 21.

¹²⁵Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus: Saying Yes to God's Love* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2002), 36.

¹²⁶Douglass, *God at Risk*, 130.

the penitent are pardoned.¹²⁷ Although God pardons before He changes a person, God has a condition attached to His pardon—the expectation of change.¹²⁸ For him God is not going to declare a sinner justified while that sinner “remains spiritually dead in sin. If a person is a full or partial rebel then He will not pronounce such a person ‘right’ with Him. Should He do so, that would be a “legal fiction.” Douglass then goes on to assert that those who are “truly justified,” because of the merits of Christ, are righteous in God’s sight. Substantively, however, that person is not yet “truly righteous,” since there are “sinful habits that need cleansing.” In that regard, he asserts that justification does not make one’s character righteous. Justification, then, is the start of a “life program that will increasingly change the actual condition or state of the Christian’s character.”¹²⁹ Justification is only genuine when it is followed by cleansing.¹³⁰

According to him four important things come along in the train when God justifies a person. First, God “recognizes faith in the change of heart”; second, “He sends peace to the penitent”; third, “He implants in the heart of faith a new life principle”; and

¹²⁷Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus*, 36.

¹²⁸Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 67.

¹²⁹Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 37. Though I understand his line of reasoning, this postulation can lead to a misunderstanding of justification and sanctification. This position seems to tend toward making justification dependent upon sanctification.

¹³⁰Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 40. It may appear that Douglass seems to make justification dependent upon sanctification. If the experience of pardon and cleansing from past sins is hinged upon future character transformation, then assurance of salvation is stripped away because the person knows that she/he is still dirty. Such a notion can have the tendency to lead to legalism since the person, in a desire to experience cleansing may place a focus upon self in order to finish the job that was started by God. If, on the other hand, the justified person stands in God’s sight pardoned and cleansed, then he/she will simply have to cooperate with God in the work of character transformation.

fourth, “He begins the work of cleansing that will eventually fit the man or woman of faith for heaven.”¹³¹ This work of fitting the believer for heaven is sanctification.

Douglass on Sanctification

That which validates the gospel, according to Douglass, is the reality of its being lived out in the lives of believers.¹³² Simply preaching it is not enough.¹³³ Sanctification, which he at times calls character development, is the gospel being lived out in the lives of believers. The true Christian demonstrates what happens when one is united to Christ. Such a person has a heart which flows with spontaneous love for God and humanity and a life that radiates Christ’s character. The believer who truly loves, focusses love on others and not upon self. As a result of the indwelling power of Christ, spontaneous love will be the habitual pattern of the lives of true believers. This is the same pattern of life depicted in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, and when demonstrated by believers’ lives, “will settle many questions in the Great Controversy and will open the way for Jesus to return.”¹³⁴

Sanctification also involves the assurance of salvation. With that in mind, Douglass asserts, some believers, in an attempt to experience the assurance of salvation, try to be more circumspect with their obedience to the laws of God. However, in the process they place so much focus upon the law that they lose sight of Christ.

¹³¹Douglass, *Faith: Saying: Yes to God*, 37.

¹³²Responding to the Eric Claude Webster’s assertion in his dissertation that he, Douglass, places a heavier emphasis upon sanctification rather than upon justification, Douglass accepts that to be true in his writings. However, this is due to Adventists not fully understanding sanctification. He contends that when he writes for a non-Adventist audience, he places a heavier emphasis upon justification. See Douglass, “Letter to Eric Webster,” 25, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

¹³³Douglass, *The End*, 78.

¹³⁴Douglass, *The End*, 112, 113.

Unfortunately, in spite of all their law-keeping, they still lack assurance and as a result believe they still have to do more.¹³⁵ He considers such attempts to be a form of legalism—since the believer is depending upon self rather than God. Such believers, instead of experiencing growth and dynamism, are crippled, because that is one of the effects of legalism.¹³⁶

Individuals who depend upon God rather than self are focused upon bringing Him glory—since for the believer all acts of Christian duty are to be motivated by a desire to *honor* God, and not by a desire to *impress* Him.¹³⁷ Douglass also believes that motives are the most important factor in service to God. The motives from which obedience springs are of crucial importance. At the same time, there are those who have the right motives, but are still struggling, living in “legalistic gloom.” Such need to learn to trust in God and fall into His everlasting arms for He is abundant in grace and mercy.¹³⁸ Trust in God is imperative for sanctification, since the believers’ part in character development is to cooperate with God and allow Him to work out His purposes in them. In that light, the character developed is not devised by human works. Character is developed through dependence upon God’s indwelling power where He puts His laws into the believers’ hearts and writes them in their minds. Therefore, to be robed with the righteousness of Christ—to wear the “wedding garment”—means to experience character transformation.

¹³⁵Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”* 98.

¹³⁶Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”* 94, 95.

¹³⁷Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”* 100, emphasis added.

¹³⁸Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”*, 101, 102.

Douglass argues that character transformation is a gift which is both imputed and imparted,¹³⁹ strengthening his argument with citations from Ellen White.¹⁴⁰

Sanctification is also linked to the Great Controversy Theme. The Great Controversy serves to disprove Satan's charges against God. God is not a tyrant. He is a God of freedom. Freedom is something with which God has created all His creatures, since without freedom there can be no true love. In order to restore God's image within humanity, the Holy Spirit works to remove from the believer's character the results of sin. Thus, through the Spirit believers become overcomers—people who hate sin—and as a result God can trust such persons with eternal life. As noted earlier, those loyal to God, are more concerned with honoring God than with impressing Him.¹⁴¹

Sanctification, from Douglass' standpoint, means a person becomes safe to save—one in whom there is no possibility of their spoiling the tranquility of heaven by a

¹³⁹Although he mentions the word imparted as regards sanctification, he appears to use that term rather loosely in this instance. The general tone of his soteriological postulations does not seem to provide much support for sanctification being imparted.

¹⁴⁰Douglass, *Should We Ever Say "I am Saved?"* 105, 106; quotes Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1900), 316, 317 and 319. "The righteousness of Christ will not cover one cherished sin. A man may be a law-breaker in heart; yet if he commits no outward act of transgression, he may be regarded by the world as possessing great integrity. But God's law looks into the secrets of the heart. Every act is judged by the motives that prompt it. Only that which is in accord with the principles of God's law will stand in the judgment."

"God is love.... But the love of God does not lead Him to excuse sin. He did not excuse it in Satan; He did not excuse it in Adam or in Cain; nor will He excuse it in any other of the children of men. He will not connive at our sins or overlook our defects of character. He expects us to overcome in His name...."

There will be no future probation in which to prepare for eternity. It is in this life that we are to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. This is our only opportunity to form characters for the home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments.

The days of our probation are fast closing. The end is near. To us the warning is given, "'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.'" Luke 21:34. Beware lest it find you unready. Take heed lest you be found at the King's feast without a wedding garment."

¹⁴¹Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 41, 42.

return to sin. To him, the gospel's primary purpose is to restore God's image within humanity. However, this is closely related to God's plan for creating an eternally secure universe. Thus, "only loyal, obedient men and women of faith can guarantee an eternally secure universe. Ultimately God wants people who are safe to save."¹⁴² Douglass connects Jesus' parable of the wedding garment with the marriage scene portrayed by John in Revelation 19. He notes that the bride—the church—has "*made herself ready*" (italics his), emphasizing that the bride of Christ has preparation to make that cannot be done by the Bridegroom. Only persons who can be trusted by the Bridegroom will be present at the wedding feast. They "have settled the question as to whether sinful men and women could ever freely reverse their rebel ways, by the grace of God, and be restored to a life that truly reflects their Maker." Those who wear the robe of Christ's righteousness are those who abide in Him, walk with Him, and answer in the affirmative to the Spirit's leading.¹⁴³

Thus, for Douglass, the purpose of the Three Angels' messages of Revelation 14 is the development of a group of people who are not only "safe to save" but also "an exhibit that rightly represents God's way of life."¹⁴⁴ Citing Ellen White from *Ministry of Healing*,¹⁴⁵ *Early Writings*,¹⁴⁶ and *Testimonies*,¹⁴⁷ Douglass avers that spotlessness of

¹⁴²Douglass, *Should We Ever Say "I am Saved?"* 74, 75.

¹⁴³Douglass, *Should We Ever Say "I am Saved?"* 105, 106.

¹⁴⁴Douglass, "Advent Waits for God's Exhibit A," *Review and Herald*, August 13, 1970, 7.

¹⁴⁵Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1905), 37. "Human effort will be efficient in the work of God just according to the consecrated devotion of the worker—by revealing the power of the grace of Christ to transform the life. We are to be distinguished from the world because God has placed His seal upon us, because He manifests in us His own character of love. Our Redeemer covers us with His righteousness."

character is one of the necessary conditions within the church before the Second Advent of Christ.¹⁴⁸

The possession of a spotless Christian character, then, means that a person is safe to save. Douglass illustrates this point by comparing the believer to the driver of an automobile. He opines that God does not remove the individual from the driver's seat. On

“In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess worldly wealth, learning, or eloquence. He asks, ““Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?””

“God can use every person just in proportion as He can put His Spirit into the soul temple. The work that He will accept is the work that reflects His image. His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristics of His immortal principles.”

¹⁴⁶Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1882), 71. “I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of “refreshing” and the “latter rain” to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore, they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. Before this time the awfully solemn declaration has gone forth, ““He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”” I saw that none could share the “refreshing” unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.”

¹⁴⁷Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1868 – 1909), 5:216. “What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.”

“Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven. Go forward, my brethren and sisters. I can only write briefly upon these points at this time, merely calling your attention to the necessity of preparation. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour.”

¹⁴⁸Douglass, *The End*, 122, 123.

the contrary, God desires that believers become “responsible, predictable, trustworthy drivers...persons made safe to drive the highways of the hereafter, made worthy by His infinite grace.”¹⁴⁹ This is a basic purpose of the gospel since the gospel is intended to produce an eternally secure universe. However, since “only habitually loyal, obedient men and women of faith can guarantee an eternally secure universe, any discussion of faith and works must focus on the end product—the transformed rebel who can be safe to save.” In that regard, both the unfallen worlds and heavenly angels desire to be sure that those who are redeemed can be trusted.¹⁵⁰

The “safe to save” idea is also important as regards the vindication of God’s character. It addresses issues such as: Was God asking too much when He asked those who follow Him to walk in the same manner as Christ? Is He trustworthy as regards His requirements? Is His Word capable of producing the results He has promised? Can believers “draw on the same power Jesus depended on to overcome sin?” Is it possible for humans to be “rescued from sin” in such a decisive manner that through His grace “they can be trusted to be loving, honest, gracious, compassionate people in whom the desire to sin ... will never arise again?”¹⁵¹ Are those who are “safe to save” perfect? And if perfect are they in such a state that it is impossible for them to fall from grace while here on earth?

¹⁴⁹Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”* 82. Although I know it is just an illustration, this illustration seems to present a bit of a soteriological challenge. Douglass is dealing with the issue of works within the context of a saving relationship with Christ. At the same time, this illustration could have placed a bit more emphasis on the cooperation between the human element and the Holy Spirit. And even though later down he does make mention of the Holy Spirit’s work in the believer’s life, at first blush the illustration appears to place too much emphasis upon the human factor in sanctification.

¹⁵⁰Douglass, *God at Risk*, 144.

¹⁵¹Douglass, “God on Trial,” *Ministry*, May 1982, 8.

Douglass on Perfection

Christian perfection is closely aligned to character development within Douglass' writings. Added to that, the overall trajectory of both his soteriology and eschatology incorporates the idea of Christian perfection.¹⁵² To him the Bible does not call upon believers to become physically and mentally perfect. Nevertheless, it expects moral character perfection of believers.¹⁵³ Douglass understands that, for Paul, perfection has to do with direction and not a state of perfection. Thus, perfection does not mean a state of sinlessness or one where the believer is beyond temptation. It is not associated with physical perfection of the body. Perfection, in the biblical sense, is all about spiritual maturity.¹⁵⁴ The Petrine epistles, just like the Pauline epistles, tend to amplify the importance of Christian perfection. In Peter's epistles Douglass perceives an unbreakable "link between Christlikeness, perfection, and the hastening of the Second Advent by committed Christians who reflect the character of their Lord."¹⁵⁵

The biblical writers, as well as Ellen White, are more concerned with moral perfection rather than static perfectionism. Furthermore, in his understanding, when Ellen White speaks of moral perfection, she includes an attitude that does not make excuses for sinning. The believer, therefore, through a living connection with God, is perfected.

Christian perfection also involves a fixed determination, on the part of the believer, to

¹⁵²Because Christian perfection is assumed in his "safe to save" concept—which was treated above—and is also a part of his Harvest Principle and last generation theology—both of which are treated below—there is no need to provide extensive treatment to it here.

¹⁵³Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 28.

¹⁵⁴Douglass, *Should We Ever Say "I am Saved?"* 111-113.

¹⁵⁵Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 31-33.

aim for the highest ideals in Christian living as well as be a person of high integrity—thereby honoring God. It should be noted that Christian perfection is an ongoing journey and not a static target. Therefore, it will never be possible for the believer to claim perfection.¹⁵⁶ Even though he sees no biblical or Ellen White evidence for static perfectionism, he still maintains that “there is a point in the growth pattern when the Christian has conquered every known sin; his behavior is predictably loving, unselfish, and Christlike.”¹⁵⁷

Christian perfection is demonstrated by those who reflect, more and more clearly, Jesus’ life. It is Christian maturity and not a static state from which it is impossible for one to sin. Simply put, perfection is Christlikeness and is more concerned with the trajectory of one’s character rather than a goal to be reached. Christians are to become perfect—mature; but Douglass also cautions that perfection should not be the primary goal of their lives. Rather, the believer should focus upon service to God and humanity.¹⁵⁸ Christian perfection does not mean that Satan will desist from tempting a believer. On the contrary, he continues to throw his most fierce temptations at the believer, from the outside as well as the inside.¹⁵⁹

Although the primary focus of the believer is not perfection, one of the necessary conditions within the church before the Second Coming is having characters that are without spot. It is impossible to receive God’s seal while not possessing spotless

¹⁵⁶Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”* 111-113.

¹⁵⁷Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 51.

¹⁵⁸Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 143, 144.

¹⁵⁹Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 51.

characters. Through the seal of God, heaven's approval of the individual's character is affirmed. To support his line of argumentation,¹⁶⁰ Douglass cites Ellen White in *Review and Herald*,¹⁶¹ *Ministry of Healing*,¹⁶² *Early Writings*,¹⁶³ and *Testimonies*.¹⁶⁴ He believes

¹⁶⁰Douglass, *The End*, 121, 122.

¹⁶¹Ellen White, "Is the Blood on the Lintel?" *Review and Herald*, May 21, 1895.

¹⁶²Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 37. "Human effort will be efficient in the work of God just according to the consecrated devotion of the worker—by revealing the power of the grace of Christ to transform the life. We are to be distinguished from the world because God has placed His seal upon us, because He manifests in us His own character of love. Our Redeemer covers us with His righteousness."

In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess worldly wealth, learning, or eloquence. He asks, "Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?"

"God can use every person just in proportion as He can put His Spirit into the soul temple. The work that He will accept is the work that reflects His image. His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristics of His immortal principles."

¹⁶³See, Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1882), 71. "I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully."

"I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of "refreshing" and the "latter rain" to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore, they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. Those who refuse to be hewed by the prophets and fail to purify their souls in obeying the whole truth, and who are willing to believe that their condition is far better than it really is, will come up to the time of the falling of the plagues, and then see that they needed to be hewed and squared for the building. But there will be no time then to do it and no Mediator to plead their cause before the Father. Before this time the awfully solemn declaration has gone forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." I saw that none could share the "refreshing" unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence."

¹⁶⁴See, Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1868-1909), 5:216. "What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity."

"Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who

that before Jesus can return to earth there must be a significant number, and not just random individuals, of believers who will reflect this manner of Christian perfection. Therefore, before the end comes, God awaits the “character preparation of a significant number of mature Christians to rightly represent the character of Jesus.”¹⁶⁵

Section Summary

Douglass’s postulations on soteriology are done within the framework of arriving at a particular end. He conceptualizes righteousness by faith as both an act and a process, thus showcasing Jesus’ role as well as that of the believer. Sin, which, in one definition, is the opposite of faith, is not inherited. However, he believes that human beings are constitutionally impacted in a negative manner because of sin. Since sin is the opposite of faith, then faith is needed to overcome sin. Faith, which is often misunderstood within theological circles, is both a noun and a verb and they both work together. Faith, he notes, is prompted by God but the human has the choice to respond. Those who live by faith live the same way Jesus did and their lives demonstrate the power of the gospel.

The gospel involves both pardon and power. Justification is equal to pardon for sin. Nevertheless, God only pardons upon the expectation of change. Justification is closely related to sanctification. Sanctification is the same as character development; in sanctification there is a demonstration of what happens when an individual is united to

receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven. Go forward, my brethren and sisters. I can only write briefly upon these points at this time, merely calling your attention to the necessity of preparation. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour.”

¹⁶⁵Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 27.

Christ. Sanctification also includes the assurance of salvation and those who are sanctified are eventually safe to save. Being safe to save is closely related to Christian perfection. For Douglass perfection is more of a process rather than a static goal. However, he opines that perfection involves an attitude of reaching for the highest ideals of Christian living. It is also important for a significant portion of the Church to reach this standard of Christian maturity before Christ returns. This he calls the Harvest Principle.

The Harvest Principle

The Harvest Principle,¹⁶⁶ according to Douglass, is an important aspect of biblical theology and is the “correlate” to conditional prophecy.¹⁶⁷ According to him, both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White have the Harvest Principle¹⁶⁸ as a basic theological principle.¹⁶⁹ He opines that this principle provides the explanation for Jesus’ holding pattern as relates to the Second Coming—a pattern which will continue until Jesus can

¹⁶⁶As regards this principle there are two salient noteworthy points. First, Douglass, by his own admission, uses eschatology as his starting point for theology. He goes about seeking an answer for the reason for the thus far unfulfilled promise of the Second Advent. In that regard, the Harvest Principle is his explanation for the delay. Second, the Harvest Principle can be viewed as a modified version of Andreasen’s Last Generation Theology. However, by his own account in a correspondence with Eric Claude Webster, he had not read Andreasen’s postulations on Last Generation Theology until 1971 by which time his views were already in print. Considering the level of popularity Andreasen’s works and ideas had during the time when Douglass would have been at College and his early days of ministry it is somewhat difficult to think he would not have heard or read it—though not necessarily from Andreasen himself. I am inclined to think that he would have been exposed to it in one form or another and later on developed his own understanding of it. See “Letter to Eric Webster,” 4, 27.

¹⁶⁷Douglass, *The End*, 65.

¹⁶⁸Douglass does not view the Harvest Principle as being a novel idea. He cites P. Gerard Damsteege, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* for support. He notices in Damsteege’s work examples of the pioneers of the SDA Church making use of this principle as early as the mid-1850s. See, Douglass, *The End*, 76, 77.

¹⁶⁹Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus: The Ripple Effect*, 3.

get credible and believable witnesses.¹⁷⁰ According to this principle, God awaits mature Christian character among a significant number of believers as the main condition to determine the events affecting the close of probation and the time of the Second Advent.¹⁷¹

Douglass employs Revelation 14:12 to establish that those who are the “harvest of the gospel seed” will present a “witness” that will give God’s ultimate call to a world steeped in sin. God is waiting for these people. He considers them to be “Exhibit A” of what the gospel can do in people’s lives.¹⁷² Heaven awaits “living proof that the gospel seed will produce its harvest” and thereby usher in the return of Christ.¹⁷³ Until such proof is provided, Jesus has to delay His Second Coming.

The Harvest Principle and Delay

Using the analogy of a farmer and a plantation of produce, he argues that in the same manner as the farmer waits until a sizable portion of the fruit is ready before harvesting, in like manner Jesus is waiting until a sizable portion of the church is ready before He returns.¹⁷⁴ Commenting on Ellen White’s statement in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 69,¹⁷⁵ he opines that it is only when the “gospel seed has produced a sizable group of

¹⁷⁰Douglass, *The End*, 14, 16.

¹⁷¹Douglass, *The End*, 65.

¹⁷²Douglass *The Faith of Jesus*, 3.

¹⁷³Douglass, “Heaven Waits for Human Channels” *Review and Herald*, August 29, 1974, 941.

¹⁷⁴Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 19.

¹⁷⁵See, Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1900), 69. ““When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.””

mature Christians” will Jesus return.¹⁷⁶ The delay in Christ’s return is not because of God but because of the harvest—it is not ripe. From God’s perspective, the harvest should have been ready a long time ago but this is not the case. The fruit, which is the personal witness of believers, is not mature.¹⁷⁷ Just as farmers know what the seed catalogue projects as the length of time until harvest, they also know that the harvest depends upon weather conditions which are beyond the farmer’s control. Likewise, the delay in the Second Advent is not because God has changed His mind; from His perspective the harvest should have occurred long ago—but the fruit is not yet ripe.¹⁷⁸

The time of the ripening of the harvest, so closely connected to the Second Coming of Christ, is not pre-set on God’s celestial time clock. However, that does not negate the fact that based upon His foreknowledge He already knows when the harvest will be ripe. Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between the delay of Christ’s return and the unready state of His people.¹⁷⁹ The Second Coming of Christ, Douglass opines, could have taken place within the lifetime of the generation who lived in 1844. However, the fruit of Christian character is not fully mature and as a result the harvest is

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.”

“It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.”

¹⁷⁶Douglass, *The End*, 67.

¹⁷⁷Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 20.

¹⁷⁸Herbert Douglass, “Jesus Waits for a Quality People,” *Review and Herald*, October 4, 1973, 9, 10.

¹⁷⁹Douglass, *The End*, 71, 72.

delayed. With that in mind, he makes use of *Selected Messages*,¹⁸⁰ where Ellen White speaks of a delayed second advent of Christ due to the believers' lack of steadfastness of faith. However, under no circumstances should Adventists "blame God for the delay in the advent."¹⁸¹

Since the delay is because of the Church, and not God, does the Harvest Principle impede God's sovereignty? For Douglass the answer is a categorical no! "The Harvest Principle in no way limits God's sovereignty. Much to the contrary, it only adds to His majesty as One who is patient, merciful, and forbearing for the sake of His universe."

Furthermore, the delay in the Second Advent serves to confirm "the nature of the great

¹⁸⁰Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958-1980), 1:67, 68. "The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional.

God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel's message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people."

"Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come here this to receive His people to their reward."

"But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith. Dissensions and divisions came in. the majority opposed with voice and pen the few who, following in the providence of God, received the Sabbath reform and began to proclaim the third angel's message. Many who should have devoted their time and talents to the one purpose of sounding warning to the world, were absorbed in opposing the Sabbath truth, and in turn, the labor of its advocates necessarily spent in answering these opponents and defending the truth. Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history!"

"It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forth years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went on in "because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfil His covenant with them."

¹⁸¹Douglass, *The End*, 68, 69.

controversy.”¹⁸² With that being said, it is important for the Church to live in accordance with the pattern of life depicted in Matthew chapters 24 and 25. When this pattern of life is demonstrated by believers’ lives, it “will settle many questions in the great controversy and will open the way for Jesus to return.”¹⁸³ But before Jesus returns He must first produce evidence showing the power of the gospel. If He does not do so then in the judgment it can be claimed that the lost did not get the opportunity to “hear God’s side” in the great controversy.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the Harvest Principle has implications for the Great Controversy. But what about mission? Does it contain implications for mission as well?

The Harvest Principle and Mission

The gospel, Douglass maintains, must be lived in “human experience” in order for it to be validated—it can’t be simply told.¹⁸⁵ In order for the gospel to be proved as more than just a theory, it must be evident in the lives of human beings. This was proved by Jesus through His life and death. Nevertheless, “even Jesus has become unconvincing for most of the world.” Therefore, believers living in the last generation have the responsibility to demonstrate through their lives the power of the gospel. These believers will not be merely pious believers or merely preachers—they will preach what they live

¹⁸²Douglass, *The End*, 70, 71.

¹⁸³Douglass, *The End*, 113.

¹⁸⁴Douglass, “Jesus Waits for a Quality People,” *Review and Herald*, December 6, 1973, 9, 10.

¹⁸⁵Douglass, *The End*, 78.

and live what they preach. Hence, the close of probation will find them carrying out their earthly responsibilities in a manner that reflects God's glorious character.¹⁸⁶

However, before a person can be ready for the call to service he/she must first experience self-development.¹⁸⁷ It is through self-development that the believer is equipped for service and with that the church will reach its maximum effectiveness.¹⁸⁸ God only provides the power needed for this level of mission when His people are ready for it. In order for God to fulfil His promise, the Church must be prepared and committed.¹⁸⁹ Referencing Ellen White again,¹⁹⁰ Douglass asserts that only after God's people have their characters prepared can they present a credible witness to the world; only then will the church experience maximum effectiveness.¹⁹¹

Thus, the Second Coming is hinged upon the completion of the Gospel Commission. Before Jesus can return, His people must "grasp the purpose of the gospel" and experience the change it brings. When this happens, His power, wisdom, and love in waiting for a prepared people will be vindicated. Then there will be a level of evangelism that has no equal in previous generations—with the possible exception of the apostolic

¹⁸⁶Douglass, *The End*, 95.

¹⁸⁷At times Douglass equates the term self-development with sanctification.

¹⁸⁸Douglass, *The End*, 142.

¹⁸⁹Douglass, "Does Jesus Wait for More Evil Before He Can Return?" *Review and Herald*, November 7, 1974, 1232.

¹⁹⁰Ellen White, "The Time of the End," *Review and Herald*, November 23, 1905, par. 6, 7. "God's people should make mighty intercession to him for help now. And they must put their whole energies into the effort to proclaim the truth during the respite that has been granted. As they consecrate themselves unreservedly to God's service, a convincing power will attend their efforts to present the truth to others, and light will shine into many hearts."

¹⁹¹Douglass, *The End*, 142.

era.¹⁹² Only after this has been accomplished will God be able to bring probationary time to a close.

The Harvest Principle and The Close of Probation

The Harvest Principle means that before probation can be closed, there must first be a “significant portion” of God’s remnant people who will prove “that His way of life can be lived on earth” through His indwelling power.¹⁹³ God basically constrains Himself from pouring out His judgments upon the wicked, “until all living at a given time have had a fair opportunity to see the difference between those who keep His commandments and those who do less.”¹⁹⁴ Summarizing statements from Ellen White,¹⁹⁵ Douglass avers that to the church is given the responsibility of bringing the world to the “moment of decision,” and doing so will certainly help to hasten the advent of Christ. However, God can only employ persons who are pure and present a credible witness in this enterprise. For His part, God promises to empower “committed people” to present “His last message

¹⁹²Douglass, “Salvation’s Gift is Not Free,” *Review and Herald*, February 20, 1975, 209, 210.

¹⁹³Douglass, *The End*, 73.

¹⁹⁴Douglass, *The End*, 73, 74.

¹⁹⁵Ellen White, *Testimonies*, 9:96. “There will be a series of events revealing that God is master of the situation. The truth will be proclaimed in clear, unmistakable language. As a people we must prepare the way of the Lord under the overruling guidance of the Holy Spirit. The gospel is to be given in its purity. The stream of living water is to deepen and widen in its course. In all fields, nigh and afar off, men will be called from the plow and from the more common commercial business vocations that largely occupy the mind, and will be educated in connection with men of experience. As they learn to labor effectively they will proclaim the truth with power. Through most wonderful workings of divine providence, mountains of difficulty will be removed and cast into the sea. The message that means so much to the dwellers upon the earth will be heard and understood. Men will know what is truth. Onward and still onward the work will advance until the whole earth shall have been warned, and then shall the end come.”

of mercy to this world.”¹⁹⁶ As a consequence, the focus of the Church should be upon receiving this power, not upon looking to external signs of the Second Advent.

The Harvest Principle and Signs

Douglass has somewhat of a different take on the “signs” of the Second Coming in Matthew 24. He perceives that in answering the disciples’ questions about the end of the world, Jesus placed greater emphasis upon the state of the church than the state of the world.¹⁹⁷ Thus, world conditions just before the close of probation may give the world as much direct warning as did world conditions just before the flood—none. One reason for this is the ever-present reality of calamities that desensitize humanity, so that they do not notice the approaching end.¹⁹⁸ Douglass reasons that those who died in the Deluge believed that their civilization would continue, despite the signs around them. In like manner, those living just before the close of probation will not perceive such hopeless conditions that they will run to the Church for safety.¹⁹⁹ Douglass sees virtually all the prophecies concerning the end time as already fulfilled. World conditions are ready, but the harvest is not. At the same time, he notes that the prophecies which have been fulfilled are those pertaining to world events, not those pertaining to what happens when God sees that the harvest is ready.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶Douglass, *The End*, 74.

¹⁹⁷Douglass, *The End*, 79.

¹⁹⁸Douglass, *The End*, 87.

¹⁹⁹Douglass, *The End*, 90.

²⁰⁰Douglass, *The End*, 70.

The Harvest Principle, Douglass avers, sheds important light on the condition of those who are eventually saved as well as those who are eventually lost. From his point of view there appears to be “a direct correlation” between the “ripening index” of God’s people and the “maturing of selfishness” in those who represent the characteristics of the enemy. Additionally, when the gospel seed matures it “will evoke previously curious or hesitant people into a mind-set of either acceptance or rejection of those life principles that leave no room for neutrality.”²⁰¹ Within that context then, not only does the fruit of good seed mature—the fruit of bad seed matures as well. “Whether wheat or tares, a harvest there will ultimately be.” All will witness an exhibition of “Christlike persons living during the stress of the final days.” Simultaneously, also on display will be the fruit produced by evil.²⁰²

Douglass also recognizes a unique place for Adventism in presenting the message of the gospel to all the world. For him, the Harvest Principle and the sanctuary doctrine are both of high importance prior to the Second Advent.

The Harvest Principle and the Sanctuary Doctrine

Douglass connects the sanctuary doctrine to both the Harvest Principle and the gospel commission. To him this doctrine brings to light the truth of Jesus’ mediatorial role—it will one day come to an end. When His role as mediator ends “He will declare that justice has been satisfied” and all the inhabitants of the earth have chosen to either

²⁰¹Douglass, *The End*, 76.

²⁰²Douglass, *The End*, 75.

accept or reject His mercy. When this happens the pre-Advent judgment will end and everyone's eternal destiny will be sealed.²⁰³

There are, according to Douglass, two reasons for this requirement: first, it is only after the people of God have the kind of character described in Revelation 14:12 that Jesus can complete His role as High Priest. Second, in order for God's honor to be vindicated and "His government cleared of Satan's accusations" there must first be a people who are cleansed from sin and who fully reflect Jesus' image. In that regard, the Harvest Principle becomes a synonym for the character developed in God's people just before the Second Coming of Christ. Through their display of consistent Christian character, there will be irrefutable proof that God's law is fair and that He offered "freedom and love when He asked for [human] obedience."²⁰⁴

The task of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to present a quality of life before the world that Jesus can one day call a reasonable reproduction of His own.²⁰⁵

Adventism's unique contribution to contemporary eschatological discussions lies in its knowing and understanding the reason for the delay in the Second Coming. To Adventism alone has been given the assignment to be "God's final answer to the sin problem." Eventually a generation of Adventists will reach the level upon which God awaits. When that happens, God will finally declare that there are a people who are proof

²⁰³Douglass, "Christ Our High Priest: Pardon and Power," *Ministry*, March, 1977, 12, 13.

²⁰⁴Douglass, *The End*, 136, 137.

²⁰⁵Douglass, "Advent Waits for Exhibit A," *Review and Herald*, August 13, 1970, 7.

that what He has “said for centuries could be done.”²⁰⁶ This awesome mandate will be carried out in the lives of the final generation.

The Last Generation

Immediately prior to the last judgment, Douglass declares, there is going to be a people on earth, quite similar to Noah, who will live blameless lives on the earth.²⁰⁷ These people, whom he calls trophies of God’s grace, are used by God as a means of appealing to others to show what happens when one chooses His way of life. To him, they are “the goal of redemption, the purpose of grace.”²⁰⁸ The last generation of believers is of great importance since the return of Christ depends upon them having the character of Christ reproduced in their lives. They will be the ripened harvest at the Lord’s return and they will, in the end, vindicate God’s law and His honor.²⁰⁹ For this group of people God is not only willing to wait, but is obligated to wait. Their lifestyle will “draw honest seekers for the better life into their camp” and defend God’s integrity.²¹⁰ Apart from the attraction of their blameless lives, would the final generation also draw seekers into the fold of God via active evangelistic work?

²⁰⁶Douglass, “Jesus Waits for a Quality People,” *Review and Herald*, December 6, 1973, 9, 10.

²⁰⁷Douglass, *The Parable of the Hurricane* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), 14, 15.

²⁰⁸Douglass, *Faith: Saying Yes to God*, 85. The challenge with this line of thinking is that it tends to minimize all the redeemed through all the ages. It seems to establish at least a two-tier salvation system. On the first tier are those who do not comprise the last generation. However, if “the goal of redemption” is realized in the last generation, then those on the first tier are saved but they did not reach the goal. On the second tier are the last generation. They have been able to reach redemption’s goal and show “the purpose of Grace.” Thus, at least so it seems, they have attained a higher level of salvation than the others who are saved.

²⁰⁹Douglass, *Faith: Saying Yes to God*, 89.

²¹⁰Douglass, “The ‘Clean Life’ Pays Off,” *Review and Herald* February 25, 1971, 11.

In Douglass' understanding, the sealing, the latter rain, and the loud cry all occur simultaneously. As a result, as long as probation remains open, the number of the sealed will be enlarged as a result of the latter rain and the loud cry, as more and more people make decisions for Christ.²¹¹ In his understanding "the loud cry" is equivalent to the quality of life demonstrated by the final generation. They provide an exhibition of the power of the gospel which is stronger than arguments. Thus, "God will be able to use that generation of believers freely ... in the final demonstration of truth."²¹²

As regards the sealing, he posits the view that the sealed will not have any iota of boastfulness as regards their sealing. They will not see themselves as superior to other believers. On the contrary, they clearly discern human frailty and sinfulness and their source of hope is Jesus' merits. Yes, they have overcome temptation in the same manner as Jesus, but they also recognize that they are unworthy. Thus, for them, their righteousness comes from the Lord and as a result they depend fully upon the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit's indwelling power that they are able to "subdue every inclination to sin, every propensity to serve self rather than do the will of

²¹¹Douglass, *The End*, 125. Douglass sees the last generation as preaching the gospel and fulfilling the commission/promise of Matthew 24:14. However, if through their preaching people are saved, do they, seeing that they are part of the last generation living before the Second Coming, also belong to "the last generation," or is it that the last generation, meaning all those who are alive just prior to the return of Christ, are not just so chronologically but spiritually? Is it that not all believers who are alive at the end do not necessarily comprise the last generation? Or could it be that among those who are saved when the last generation preaches the gospel that there are those who will die and those who will be among the living saints when Christ returns? This seems to be somewhat puzzling and there are many questions arising.

²¹²Douglass, "The Kind of Person who Will Finish the Work: No Anxiety in the Man of Faith," *Review and Herald*, August 30, 1973, 11, 12.

God.” They know that without the imparted grace of Christ they would fall prey to the sophistries of the Devil.²¹³

After the close of probation, according to Douglass, the sealed would still have the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Therefore, they will not have to depend upon their own strength in order that they may prove their perfection. The idea of believers having to go it alone after the close of probation is not supported by either the Bible or the writings of Ellen White and is the product of a “profound misunderstanding of the character of our heavenly Father, as well as a hasty, even careless, reading of sacred materials.”²¹⁴

Ultimately, the last generation will live victoriously above the temptations of the devil through the same avenue as Jesus—complete dependence upon God’s Spirit. It is only upon realizing that God is waiting to see the Church reach this standard of spiritual maturity, that Adventists will become serious about it. Then the same faith whereby Jesus was able to be “the sinless man among men” will be manifest within the last generation. At that time the words of Revelation 14:12, “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” will apply to the last generation of Adventists. For that reason, “in a special sense” God has a need for the last generation since they will help to vindicate “His patience” and “justice” and forever settle the loyalty of those beings who never fell.²¹⁵ The last generation also serves to forever silence Satan’s accusation that

²¹³Douglass, *The End*, 122, 123.

²¹⁴Douglass, *Should We Ever Say, “I am Saved”?* 88.

²¹⁵Douglass, “The Demonstration That Settles Everything,” *Review and Herald*, January 6, 1972, 13, 14.

God's law cannot be kept. Even though Jesus did so, Satan, has never fully accepted it, claims Douglass, and through their victorious lives the saints in the final generation constantly frustrate him and prove that God did not ask too much of His children in requiring their obedience.²¹⁶

Chapter Summary

Herbert Douglass presents some strong arguments for Jesus having a postlapsarian human nature. He makes copious use of the writings of Ellen White on the topic and sees his position as being consistent with what she wrote. His concept of sin seems to be somewhat inclined in the direction of action and condition—and at times may be interpreted to mean action leading to condition. His soteriological postulations, although placing a heavy emphasis upon victorious living, instead of a defeatist approach to Christian living, naturally leads to his eschatological positions. God needs a significant proportion of the Church to reach a high level of spiritual maturity—ready for harvest—before Christ can return to the earth. In that regard the last generation of believers have a key role in vindicating God's honor and finishing the work of the gospel.

Having said that, what about Woodrow Whidden? How does he view the human nature of Christ within the writings of Ellen White? Does he support the prelapsarian, the postlapsarian, or the “third option” within Adventist Christology? These and other questions are addressed in the following chapter.

²¹⁶Douglass, “Why Time Lingers,” *Review and Herald*, December 4, 1975, 1410.

CHAPTER 4

WOODROW WHIDDEN'S CHRISTOLOGY

Woodrow Whidden entered the Adventist Christological debate subsequent to Herbert Douglass. To a certain extent, his Christological postulations are done within the context of responding to those who adhere to the postlapsarian position. After a brief biographical sketch, the chapter will examine core elements of Whidden's soteriology.¹ Within the context of his soteriology, the chapter looks at his Christology, emphasizing his understanding of the humanity of Christ, and especially his interpretation of Ellen White's writings on the topic. How then did Woodrow Whidden enter the Adventist Christological debate on the human nature of Christ?

Brief Biographical Sketch of Woodrow Whidden

Woodrow Whidden received his BA in Theology from Southern Adventist University in 1967, and his Master of Divinity from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in 1969. Since the book *Questions on Doctrine* was published in 1957, and the debate surrounding it was probably at its apex in the decade of the 1960s,

¹The main point of focus in this chapter is Woodrow Whidden's understanding of the human nature of Christ in the writings of Ellen White. However, since there is such a close relationship between soteriology and Christology it is only natural to look at his soteriology. Nevertheless, a comprehensive examination of his soteriology is beyond the scope of this work. For this reason, just the core elements, especially as they relate to the humanity of Christ, come into focus.

Whidden had early exposure to the raging debate within Adventism as regards the human nature of Christ. After Seminary, he served in pastoral ministry in the United States.

During his pastoral ministry he obtained leave to pursue a Ph.D. at Drew University where he concentrated on soteriological developments within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and American Wesleyanism. His dissertation (1989) was titled “The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent Path to Perfection, 1836-1902.”² Then he taught in the Andrews University department of Religion from 1990 to 2006. In 2006 he moved to the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies in the Philippines, where he served as chair of the Department of Theological-Historical Studies of the Seminary at AIAS.

Whidden frequently contributes to *Ministry*, a Seventh-day Adventist journal for pastors, and has also served on various Seventh-day Adventist General Conference committees focusing upon soteriological and Christological matters.³ The fact that he has been chosen to serve on such important committees helps to highlight his profile within Adventism, and as such it is important to understand of his soteriology and Christology.

²Although beyond the scope of this work, it is important to indicate, though briefly, John Wesley’s understanding of Christian perfection. Ellen White grew up within the Methodist tradition and would doubtless have been exposed to the Wesleyan understanding of Christian perfection. For that reason, within Adventism it is instructive, at the least, to have an understanding of Christian perfection from a Wesleyan perspective. For Wesley there are particular things which are *not* included in Christian perfection. Namely, perfection in knowledge, perfection in judgment, never free from physical and mental infirmities, never free from temptations. In terms of what perfection includes, Wesley posited three stages in perfection: not committing outward sins, overcoming inward sins, perfected in love. For a more detailed understanding of Wesley’s view on Christian Perfection, see Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, editors, *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 70-84.

³Woodrow Whidden, “Course Syllabus for THST616 Doctrine of Christ” (Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies, Spring 2010), 10.

Whidden's Soteriology

Since soteriology is the doctrine of salvation, it begins with the question: why is there a need for salvation? What is there about human nature which results in the need for salvation?

Whidden on Human Nature

According to Whidden, human beings are in a fallen state and therefore “alienated from God.”⁴ This sorry state of human affairs exists because of that which was done by Adam. Due to Adam’s sin, the entire human family has “been born into a state of profound sinfulness of nature which has led inevitably to acts of sin.” This he understands to be the meaning of “original sin.” Due to their sinful condition humans are (1) bereft of the natural ability to “seek after God and are hopelessly self-centered;” (2) are not naturally inclined to “want to do the will of God (in fact they more naturally want to do the wrong thing);” (3) are not always capable of clearly defining that which is right from that which is wrong, and (4) “cannot, in their own strength, change their sinful natures or actions.” Furthermore, even though there are some residual vestiges of the *Imago Dei* in humanity, humans are still completely incapable of receiving salvation without God’s help.⁵ He further posits the view that humans have natural proclivities to sin and as such are “responsible before God to do something about their blameworthy

⁴Woodrow Whidden, “Seventh-day Adventists and the Dynamics of Salvation,” Unpublished Paper in the possession of the author of this dissertation), 1.

⁵Whidden, “Seventh-day Adventists and the Dynamics of Salvation, 2.

condition.”⁶ However, because of their sinful nature, humans are completely incapable of extricating themselves from the pernicious grip of sin and are totally bereft of the resources necessary for finding reconciliation to God.⁷

Whidden acknowledges Ephesians 2 and Romans 7 as both presenting a rather unpleasant portrait of the human condition. Human beings are corrupt and totally depraved and as such are in dire need.⁸ He asserts that Ellen White also understood human beings to be depraved. Human natural depravity, according to Whidden, is evidenced in Ellen White’s understanding of sin.

Whidden on Sin

Whidden commences his treatment of Ellen White’s definition of sin by quoting *Education*, page 25: “There was nothing poisonous in the fruit itself, and the sin was not merely in yielding to appetite. It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority” that constituted the first sin. On that basis he concludes that Ellen White understood sin as being more than just acts; rather, she goes to the root of the matter. To him, Ellen White was unafraid to define sin within the context of the “attitudes of the mind” and not just the actions stemming from the “lower nature.” Thus, behavior even though important, is of secondary importance.⁹

⁶Woodrow Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ: A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 21.

⁷Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 8.

⁸Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2012), 52.

⁹Woodrow Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” (Unpublished Paper, Sanctuary Bible Conference, 1997, Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research), 22. Kevin Paulson argues for Jesus having “sin” in His “lower” but not His “higher nature.” See Kevin Paulson, “The Lower and Higher Natures: The Key to Resolving the Adventist

Having established his basic framework for understanding Ellen White's definition of sin, Whidden identifies a twofold understanding of sin within her thought. On the one hand, she views sin as actions which transgress God's will, and on the other she sees it as depravity—which takes in such things as “inclinations,” “tendencies,” and a “bent to sin.”¹⁰ From Whidden's perspective, even though she includes depravity in her understanding of sin, she does not do so in the Augustinian/Calvinistic manner.¹¹ Furthermore, he believes it would not be correct to connect her understanding of sin with the concept of Original Sin as defined by Augustine and Calvin.¹² It would also be incorrect to connect her with Pelagius.¹³ Nevertheless, she supports the idea of Adam's sin causing his progeny to come into the world with inherent tendencies to sin. Whidden also notes that she uses the term “original sin” on only one occasion, (*Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901), but in doing so she made a connection between Adam's sin and its echo in corrupt human nature.¹⁴

Christology Debate,” chapter 11 in Woodrow Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ: A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 89-92.

¹⁰Woodrow Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent path to Perfection, 1836-1902” (Doctoral Dissertation, Drew University, 1990), 128.

¹¹Whidden supports this assertion by quoting Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 163. “In order to understand this matter aright, we must remember that our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable of ourselves to pursue a right course. It is only by the grace of God, combined with the most earnest effort on our part, that we can gain the victory. The intellect, as well as the heart, must be consecrated to the service of God. He has claims upon all there is of us.”

¹²Both Augustine and Calvin acceded to the seven facets of original sin as outlined in the “Preliminary Note on theological Terms” at the beginning of chapter 2, above.

¹³He does not see any evidence in Ellen White's writings to support the concept that human beings are born morally neutral. See Woodrow Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 42.

¹⁴Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 128, 129. See chapter 5 for my analysis of this assertion regarding Ellen White and original sin.

While recognizing the presence of contrary opinions within Adventism regarding Ellen White and original sin—he mentions John Wood as an example—Whidden maintains that Ellen White had issues with the transmission of “guilt,” but not the transmission of depravity.¹⁵ However, she does state that human beings receive nothing from Adam “but guilt and the sentence of death.”¹⁶ Whidden explains that through this statement Ellen White was apparently placing an emphasis upon practicality rather than theory. The issue at hand, from his point of view, is not really the guilt of Adam, but that of each individual based upon wrong choices, supporting his conclusion from Ellen White in *Patriarchs and Prophets*¹⁷ and *In Heavenly Places*.¹⁸ Whidden further believes that Ellen White was not concerned with the matter of God allowing human beings to come into the world with a nature which naturally leads to sinful actions. From her perspective, the important thing is the presence of sinful natures in human beings and this

¹⁵Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 129, 130.

¹⁶See, Ellen White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 475. “Parents have a more serious charge than they imagine. 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.”

¹⁷See, Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1890), 306. “It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin.”

¹⁸See, Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places*, 146. “As a result of Adam’s disobedience every human being is a transgressor of the law, sold under sin. Unless he repents and is converted, he is under bondage to the law, serving Satan, falling into the deceptions of the enemy, and bearing witness against the precepts of Jehovah. But by perfect obedience to the requirements of the law, man is justified. Only through faith in Christ is such obedience possible.”

is an issue which confronts God as well as the sinner. That is why she does not deal with original guilt.¹⁹

Whereas he identifies a twofold understanding of sin within the writings of Ellen White, Whidden sees four aspects of sin in the Bible. First, according to 1 John 3:4, “sin is the transgression of the law.” Whidden identifies this aspect as the “fruitful” aspect of sin—which is to be contrasted with the “rootful” understanding of sin. This first aspect defines sin as willful and gives evidence of a rebellious character. Consequently, guilt and condemnation accompany such sin. Second, sin is the kind of attitude which makes excuses for negative feelings such as “hate” and “lust.” Third, he uses Romans 14:23 “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” This definition puts sin beyond an act and beyond negative attitudes. This third definition brings into focus such attitudes as godlessness and dependence upon self. Fourth, and most controversial, there is the “viral, or systemic aspect of sin.” This definition sees sin as more than just bad human actions, as in 1 John 3:4. Sin also entails dangerous attitudes or a “faithless relationship to God.” It is “the natural, *deranged, bad things that we are* from birth” (emphasis Whidden’s). In his understanding when Ellen White speaks of “natural propensities,” “selfish inclinations,” and “hereditary tendencies,” she has this definition of sin in mind.

In Whidden’s view, this fourth definition of sin means that human beings enter the world naturally inbred with “depravity,” [and] “corruption” which in turn naturally lead to a lack of trust in God. He views Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18, 19, 21; and Romans 5:17-19 as biblical passages supporting this definition of sin. All human

¹⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 130, 131.

beings, due to this fourth understanding/aspect of sin, are born in need of conversion.²⁰

Whidden sees various names for this fourth view: “birth sin,” “total depravity,” “original sin,” or “total corruption.” At the same time, he does *not* believe that human beings are condemned because of this sin.²¹ Nevertheless, it inevitably leads to wrong actions since it comes along with improper propensities, attitudes, and behaviors.²² Therefore, birth sin leads to all human beings needing God’s “awakening, convicting, converting, justifying, sanctifying and glorifying grace since” they lack the power to deal with it on their own.²³

²⁰Whidden sees a relationship between our understanding of Christ’s human nature, pre or post-fall, and our understanding of sin. Instead of limiting his definition of sin to 1 John 3:4, he also uses Romans 14:23 “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” In that light he views the root of every temptation as being “self-trust” versus trusting in God. Thus, the “original sin” of Adam was his decision to trust in himself rather than rely upon God’s revealed Word. On the other hand, Christ was able to be victorious because of “His constant dependence on the grace which was imparted to Him in response to His clinging faith in His Father’s assuring, guiding Word and the Spirit’s sustaining power.” See Woodrow Whidden and Remwil Tornalejo. “Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response from an Arminian/Adventist Perspective,” Unpublished Paper, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI, 15.

²¹There can be some implications arising from Whidden’s assertion that no one is damned as a result of being born in a degenerate condition. If no one is damned for being born in a degenerate condition does he mean that no one is born in need of redemption? If one is not damned for being born in a degenerate condition then how is it, according to his argument, that human beings are born “alienated from God?” If being “alienated from God” means that human beings are born in a degenerate condition; and if being “alienated from God” means that human beings are in need of redemption, then, why is it that no one is damned until refusing to accept God’s provision? In this scenario, what will be the case of someone who never got the opportunity to accept or reject God’s provision for redemption or someone who is incapable for making an intelligent choice either for or against accepting the said provision?

²²Woodrow Whidden, “What Have We Thought, and How then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’”, 19-21. Whidden uses slightly different wording to express his understanding of the four aspects of sin later in this same work. Elsewhere he adds sin is more than an act—it also includes “the natural *deranged, bad things that we are* from birth... invigorated by faithless indulgence. We come into this world with inbred, natural ‘depravity,’ ‘corruption,’ and just naturally tend to distrust God and easily do the wrong thing.” Accordingly, then, this is the “most ‘rootful’ definition of sin which afflicts humans who have come into the world since the ‘fall’...” The biblical texts he uses include: Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9; Rom 7:18, 19; 21; 5:17-19. See Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 20, 21.

²³Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’”, 25.

Based upon this fourfold definition of sin, Whidden is willing to incorporate relational aspects into his understanding of sin.²⁴

He sees Ellen White as agreeing with all four definitions of sin. From his perspective, she had no qualms with identifying sin with mind attitudes. Furthermore, he sees her writings as presenting an argument for birth, or original sin. In doing so he decries those who give “wholesale” condemnation to traditional Augustinian and Calvinistic definitions of original sin, but in the process neglect to see the undergirding elements of truth that are also present. Even though Whidden has his own reservations on certain aspects of original sin, he nonetheless sees certain aspects of truth in it. Furthermore, he does not see Ellen White as embracing everything about it either. For him, as noted above, she rejects those aspects of the Augustinian/Calvinistic understanding that are not properly rooted in Scripture. At the same time, she accepts the aspects that are biblical. In that regard, he sees her as giving support to the notion that human beings enter the world as “seriously damaged goods,”²⁵ bolstering his arguments with statements from *Patriarchs and Prophets*,²⁶ *Historical Sketches*,²⁷ and *In Heavenly Places*.²⁸

²⁴Whidden believes that this relational definition of sin will not result in antinomianism or “cheap grace.” On the contrary, eliminating the relational definition of sin will leave the unwelcomed alternatives of “despair or self-deceptive Pharisaism.” See, Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 23.

²⁵Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 21-24.

²⁶Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 61. “After their sin Adam and Eve were no longer to dwell in Eden. They earnestly entreated that they might remain in the home of their innocence and joy. They confessed that they had forfeited all right to that happy abode, but pledged themselves for the future to yield strict obedience to God. But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin; they had lessened their strength to resist evil and had opened the way for Satan to gain more ready access to them. In

Just as Whidden sees sin as having more than one definition, he also sees sin as having more than one category. For him, there are willful premeditated sins, unplanned sins,²⁹ unknown sins³⁰ and concupiscence.³¹ He opines that there is debate on whether or not concupiscence has to be atoned for by Jesus' blood.³² Based upon his interpretation of Ellen White's statement in Manuscript 50, 1900, later published in *Selected Messages*,³³

their innocence they had yielded to temptation; and now, in a state of conscious guilt, they would have less power to maintain their integrity.”

²⁷Ellen White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, (Basle, Switzerland: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 138. “There is a great work to be done for many of us. Our minds and characters must become as the mind and character of Christ. Selfishness in inwrought in our very being. It has come to us as an inheritance, and has been cherished by many as a precious treasure. No special work of God can be accomplished until self and selfishness are overcome. To many everything connected with themselves is of great importance. Self is a center, around which everything seems to revolve.”

²⁸Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places*, 163, 195. “In order to understand this matter aright, we must remember that our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable of ourselves to pursue a right course. It is only by the grace of God, combined with the most earnest effort on our part, that we can gain the victory. The intellect, as well as the heart, must be consecrated to the service of God. He has claims upon all there is of us.” “Bad habits are more easily formed than good habits, and the bad habits are given up with more difficulty. The natural depravity of the heart accounts for this well-known fact—that it takes far less labor to demoralize the youth, to corrupt their ideas of moral and religious character, than to engraft upon their character the enduring, pure, and uncorrupted habits of righteousness and truth. Self-indulgence, love of pleasure, enmity, pride, self-esteem, envy, jealousy, will grow spontaneously, without example and teaching. In our present fallen state all that is needed is to give up the mind and character to its natural tendencies. In the natural world, give up a field to itself and you will see it covered with briars and thorns; but if it yields precious grain or beautiful flowers, care and unremitting labor must be applied.”

²⁹Whidden borrows the distinction between willful and unplanned sins from John Wesley. See Whidden, “Seventh-day Adventists and the Dynamics of Salvation,” 3.

³⁰Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism,” *Ministry* (October 1993), 5-9.

³¹Whidden, “Seventh-day Adventists and the Dynamics of Salvation,” 3, 4. Whidden considers the word “concupiscence” as being a somewhat “clumsy” expression and he equates it to “lusts, propensities, inclinations, tendencies, or proclivities to sin.... natural human tendency to go against the known will of God.”

³²For Adventists who consider Christ as taking a sinful human nature concupiscence does not mean condemnation. For them, Christ's, in His humanity, had a spiritual nature within which concupiscence existed but He was able to exercise constant control over it by relying upon the Father. See Paulson's response to Whidden in *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 89-92.

³³Ellen White, Manuscript 50, 1900 (published in Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 1:344). “Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us

he concludes that Jesus' blood is indeed needed to atone for concupiscence.³⁴

Furthermore, he highlights the important role of Christ *for* the sinner—justification—as well as *in* the sinner—sanctification. In doing so he pays special attention to the fact that both justification and sanctification are works of grace.

Having viewed Whidden's understanding/definition of sin, as well as his perspective of Ellen White on sin, it is now imperative to examine his own perspective, as well as his conception of Ellen White's perspective, on the solution to sin—salvation.

Whidden's Understanding of Ellen White on Salvation

The following section only samples Whidden's understanding of Ellen White on salvation. Furthermore, this sample is limited to the area of *justification*, as Whidden's perspective on White's view of *sanctification* will be examined later in connection with perfection and Last Generation Theology.³⁵

as does Christ, who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit's striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.”

³⁴Whidden, “Seventh-day Adventist and the Dynamics of Salvation,” 11, 12. In discussing Whidden's definition of sin it was noted that he did not consider human beings as standing condemned before God because of “birth sin”. If his definitions of concupiscence and birth sin are synonymous then there can be a technical difficulty arising. Since if the two terms mean the same thing then the logical question is: why is there a need for atonement for that which does not bring condemnation?

³⁵For a more comprehensive picture of Whidden's soteriology, see his doctoral dissertation, “The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent Path to Perfection.”

Whidden recognizes that one can only understand Ellen White’s Christology within the context of her soteriology and vice versa.³⁶ While recognizing her acceptance of justification by faith before the 1880s, Whidden sees fewer statements in her writings on the issue of justification by faith before that time. At the 1883 General Conference Session however, her sermons already placed a heavy emphasis upon this topic.³⁷ Additionally, he believes that at the 1888 General Conference Session she did not show any correlation among justification, sanctification, and the nature of Christ—although the nature of Christ was always central throughout her ministry.³⁸ Furthermore, due to her understanding of the sinful human condition, her soteriology emphasizes the believer’s need of Christ throughout the Christian journey.³⁹

Justification, in her thought, is always based upon the merits of Jesus and as such there is no justification by works. In Whidden’s view, Ellen White presents⁴⁰ a clear “depiction of objective justification”—justification from the outside—based upon the merits of Jesus Christ. Even when, on the outside, sinners are doing the right thing, they are still in need of the merits of Christ.⁴¹ The same holds true for works of believers after

³⁶Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 11.

³⁷Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 27.

³⁸Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 91.

³⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 141.

⁴⁰See, Ellen White, “Sanctify Them Through Thy Truth,” *Review and Herald*, March 1, 1892, 130. “Jesus is in the heavenly courts pleading with the Father in our behalf. He presents our prayers, mingling with them the precious incense of his own merit, that our prayers may be acceptable to the Father. He puts the fragrance into our prayers, and the Father hears us because we ask for the very things which we need, and we become to others a savor of life unto life. Jesus came to suffer in our behalf, that he might impart to us his righteousness. There is but one way of escape for us, and that is found only in becoming partakers of the divine nature.”

⁴¹Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 101

conversion. Due to inherent human corruption, even the best performance of believers has the “stench of ‘earthly odor’” that “makes their works meritoriously unacceptable.” Furthermore, even when such works are inspired by the Holy Spirit, as long as they are human works, they are without merit.⁴² Human beings are completely dependent upon Christ for justification. And even after justification, human works have no saving value before God.

Although the believer’s works are of no saving value before God, there is a great desire within the believer to perform good works and hate sin. In Whidden’s understanding, Ellen White shows a close relationship between justification by faith and the believer’s attitude toward sin. True believers have a great “desire to obey God” and possess “a distaste for sin in any form.” Believers are humble, not trusting in self-righteousness, and with an evident loyal attitude toward God. In turn, God accounts them “just and righteous, despite their sinful natures, deficiencies, and unwitting failures.”⁴³ Since human works are of no saving value to God, and since human beings have unwitting failures, as well as being born into a state of depravity, what about Christ? Could His human nature be exactly the same as every other human being, yet His works be acceptable to God?

The Human Nature of Christ

This is probably the most pivotal subsection of this chapter. It surveys Whidden’s understanding of the human nature of Christ, includes his interpretation of Ellen White on

⁴²Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 44. This point is pivotal to his understanding of the human nature of Christ in contrast to that of the rest of humanity.

⁴³Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 283.

the human nature of Christ, and introduces his paradigm to solve the tension within Adventism regarding Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. The focus now turns to Whidden's understanding of the human nature of Christ.

Ellen White and the Human Nature of Christ in Adventist History

In one way or another, everything comes with a history; so the issue of the humanity of Christ within Adventism also has its history. Chapter one of this dissertation covered the overall history of the topic. However, within the context of the current chapter, it is imperative to look at Whidden's perspective on the history of the humanity of Christ within Adventism.

Whidden does not hold that Ellen White placed central focus upon the humanity of Christ during the 1888 General Conference Session or immediately thereafter. To him, the humanity of Christ, in general, and particularly with reference to righteousness by faith, is not central to the controversy surrounding 1888—that is within the writings of Ellen White. In his understanding, it was not until the 1950s that the humanity of Christ as it relates to righteousness by faith became a controversial issue within Adventism.⁴⁴

In Whidden's view, Ellen White never gave either the prelapsarian or postlapsarian position the status of a "pillar" in Adventist theology—she did not see it as an "eternal verity." Closely related to this issue is the lack of "direct or explicit evidence" of her giving approval to *all* of A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott's respective Christologies. Consequently, Whidden does not believe that either the

⁴⁴Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature'?" 8.

prelapsarian or the postlapsarian position constitutes “essential” Adventist doctrine. These views are more “processive”—they are still in the process of theological development—and thus do not carry a demand for complete unanimity.⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, he takes issue with the nomenclature used within the debate. To him, terms such as “*historic Adventism, traditional Adventism and new theology*” do not aid in the debate. He suggests the following terms as better replacements: “*Christian verities, or eternal verities* for basic doctrines embraced by Adventists and held by most other Christians, *essential Adventism* for that which is distinctively Adventist, *processive Adventism* for those issues that are important but still unsettled, and *nonessential Adventism* for that which is interesting but not central to Adventist self-understanding” (emphases in the original).⁴⁶ Thus, by assigning the humanity of Christ to the “processive Adventism” category, he acknowledges its importance as well as its yet unsettled nature.

Interestingly, Whidden identifies himself as a former member of the post-fall/perfectionist⁴⁷ camp within Adventism. He also contends that this issue has experienced diversity of interpretations within the history of Adventism, and that Adventism does not hold any monopoly on the orthodox way to understand these issues.⁴⁸ By identifying himself as a former adherent of the postlapsarian camp in the

⁴⁵Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 7, 8. This appears to be an important point from Whidden’s perspective. It allows for a level of “live and let live” attitude among Adventists on the humanity of Christ. On the other side, one is left to wonder if the different camps will be willing to adopt such an attitude.

⁴⁶Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry*, (October 1993), 5.

⁴⁷The issue of perfection, especially in relation to the humanity of Christ and Last Generation Theology, will be discussed below.

⁴⁸Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry*, (October 1993), 5. We can see here that Whidden is not afraid of exploring the option of getting a better understanding of Jesus’

debate, Whidden shows the possibility of changing camps.⁴⁹ Because he changed camps it is easy to assume that he has personal insights into more than one camp. Therefore, how does he currently articulate the human nature of Christ?

Again referencing Ellen White,⁵⁰ Whidden emphasizes the importance of Christology for understanding biblical truth, and that Christ's work on behalf of humanity is the central biblical truth.⁵¹ As noted above, Whidden has a fourfold definition of sin which provides shape to his basic concept of Christ's humanity. To him, Christ did *not* have to assume/take on any of the four aspects of sin: namely "bad acts," "harbored evil attitudes," "broken relationship with God through distrust of His Word and power," or "corrupt, depraved propensities, tendencies and inclinations." Even though it *was* necessary for Christ to assume "humanity and many of its ill-effects," and even though it was also necessary for humanity's sins to be "imputed to Him," thereby making Him become "sin for us," it was *not* necessary for "Him to be a sinner in either sinful acts or corrupt nature."⁵²

Whidden believes that it is essential to consider Jesus' humanity as it relates to the fourth biblical definition of sin. He wonders if Jesus could have been humankind's Savior from sin while at the same time be born with the natural "depravity" with which all

human nature within the writings of non-Adventists. By this statement it is also evident that Whidden appears to be addressing a tendency for Adventists to believe they have some sort of monopoly on truth.

⁴⁹As was demonstrated in chapter 2, A. Leroy Moore also experienced a change in his understanding of the humanity of Christ.

⁵⁰See, Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1892), 156-160.

⁵¹Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 5.

⁵²Whidden, "Repairers of the Link: The Humanity of Christ Debate—An Introduction" (Unpublished Manuscript, Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research), 152, 153.

humans are born? He wonders if it could be said of Jesus at His birth that “by nature” He was a child of “wrath just as others” (Ephesians 2:3)?⁵³ He wonders: if Christ, like the rest of the human family, had “sinful corruption in His nature,... does this not strongly imply that He needed conversion, the new birth, or the ‘regenerating’ work of the Holy Spirit at some point in His incarnate experience?”⁵⁴

Not surprisingly then, he contends that it is not appropriate to say that Christ was born with a sinful nature since that would mean He needed to be converted as the rest of the human family. He further maintains that the claim that Christ was converted from the womb is without biblical or Ellen White support.⁵⁵ At the same time he believes sin clearly “*affected*” Christ’s human nature. Nevertheless, it is *not* clear to him that Christ was “*infected*” with the virulence of ‘depravity’ and ‘corruption,’ in either His ‘higher’ or ‘lower natures’” (emphases in the original). Whidden further avers that it is absolutely clear that all the rest of the human family *are* “born with such virulent infection as a natural inheritance from Adam and all of our other earthly ancestors.”⁵⁶ This leads to the question: What is the biblical testimony regarding the humanity of Christ.

The Humanity of Christ in the Bible

Whidden finds ample evidence in Scripture for the humanity of Christ. However, as regards the precise nature of that humanity, Whidden doubts the existence of strong

⁵³Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 33.

⁵⁴Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 139.

⁵⁵Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature’?” 17.

biblical evidence supporting either the prelapsarian or postlapsarian position. He identifies Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 8:3; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 1:35 and John 8:46 as the key biblical passages on the issue. Examining each text in turn, he finds that Philippians 2:5-8 affirms Jesus' real humanity, but does not provide any "explicit or contextual hints as to how human sinfulness affected or infected Him."

With regard to Romans 8:3, he admits to the possibility of the postlapsarian position—where the phrase "in the likeness of sinful flesh" may appear to mean Christ came with a sinful human nature. However, he believes that the text speaks about likeness and not the "very same, or exact likeness of sinful flesh." Furthermore, he thinks that when one reads Romans 8:3 within the context of what immediately precedes it, then it places humanity in "deep trouble" since Paul admits to his inability to perform good and his proclivity to doing evil. Therefore, Whidden prefers to see "likeness" as portraying a strong sense of identity between Christ and the rest of humanity.

Further, considering the overall context of Romans 8:3, he wonders if Jesus, would ever have said as Paul did, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with Me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Could Jesus have avoided sinning if Romans 7:18, 19 is applied to His birth nature?⁵⁷ Consequently, within the context of Romans 7, Whidden posits three possible interpretations to Romans 8:3. First, if Paul's intention was to show Jesus as another sinful human being, then he could have made that explicit. Second, Paul could have simply stated that God sent His son "in the likeness of flesh." But this would have

⁵⁶Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature'?" 17, 18.

⁵⁷Whidden, "Repairers of the Link," 46.

suggested Docetism—the idea that Jesus only *appeared* to be human. Third, Paul could have said exactly what he did say. This, to him, is the only “viable option” open to Paul within the context of Romans 7 and 8. And since Paul’s point of emphasis in Romans 8:3 was on what Jesus took, when sent to earth by the Father, then there is a strong implication that Paul has in mind Christ’s nature and not His character.⁵⁸

As regards Romans 1:4, Whidden reasons that this text is an affirmation of Jesus’ human ancestry, used to support His full humanity. And concerning Hebrews 2:16-18, he does not understand the word “all” to mean in every particular, since all other human beings have sinned and Jesus did not. All other humans inevitably sinned, because their natures were corrupted, but this does not apply to Jesus since He never sinned. And as if to pre-empt any objection on the part of those within the postlapsarian camp, he mentions that they also make an exception for Jesus in their interpretation of the expression “in all things it behoved [sic] him to be made like unto his brethren.” Therefore, since the Scripture provides little explicit evidence to support either a prelapsarian or postlapsarian position, it will be best to be less dogmatic on the issue.⁵⁹

At the same time, Whidden, sees both Scripture and Adventist tradition providing support for Jesus’ real humanity. Because Christ was truly human, His temptations were real, and failure was a genuine possibility.⁶⁰ Added to that, in Whidden’s opinion, it was not necessary for Christ “to be born with either a bent to sin or have a history of sinning

⁵⁸Whidden, “Repairers of the Link, 47, 48.

⁵⁹Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 26-29.

⁶⁰Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 26-29.

to feel the power of temptation.” Further, Christ’s temptations found their basis in the “possibility of using His full deity to resist the wiles of the Devil.”⁶¹

Having examined Whidden’s portrayal of the biblical testimony on the human nature of Christ, the stage is now set for a fuller picture of his overall postulations on the humanity of Christ.⁶²

Christ’s Human Nature Is Neither Fully Postlapsarian nor Prelapsarian

Even though Whidden presents a plethora of arguments against the postlapsarian position, he expends little effort arguing against the prelapsarian position.⁶³ He believes the debate among Adventists, though involving Christ’s humanity, is really about His sinlessness. He sees Adventists moving toward a consensus understanding that Christ’s humanity was “affected” (“weakened”) by sin, but His human will was not “infected” with the animus of evil—sinful “bents,” “inclinations,” “propensities,” or “tendencies” to act in any manner divergent from the Father’s will. So, even though He took “*upon*” Himself humanity’s enfeebled sinful human nature, yet “*in*” Him there was no evidence

⁶¹Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 67. When one considers the advent of sin in heaven, as well as in Eden with Adam and Eve, it is relatively easy to resonate with the issue of temptation and a bent toward sin.

⁶²This subsection is divided into two: first, Whidden’s views on the humanity of Christ and second his understanding of Ellen White on the humanity of Christ. This is done in order to show how he interprets the writings of Ellen White on the humanity of Christ.

⁶³As demonstrated in chapter two of this work, there are not many advocates of the prelapsarian position within contemporary Adventism. Perhaps this is why Whidden expends little effort to oppose it. The postlapsarian position, on the other hand, is still very much alive, so he consistently addresses it. It seems apparent that he does not hold a bias toward the prelapsarian position and against the postlapsarian position.

of the “least taint of sin or sinfulness.”⁶⁴ Thus, for Whidden, “Christ was enough *like* us in His *identity* with our real and true humanity to be [a] genuinely empathetic, graciously transforming Intercessor and enough *unlike* us in the *uniqueness*⁶⁵ of His ‘sinless’ human nature (not just His character) to be a fully satisfying, effectual, sinless substitute” (emphases in the original).⁶⁶ This understanding of the human nature of Christ actually informs his understanding of the topic within the writings of Ellen White.

In terms of Christ’s identity with the rest of the human family, Whidden does not share the view that Christ had to have a human nature exactly the same as us in order for Him to assist believers and bring them victory. He also discusses whether Jesus had an advantage over the rest of humanity, if, indeed, His humanity did not have a bent to evil—especially taking into consideration the fact that all other humans have depraved natures?⁶⁷ To Whidden, the things that are considered as giving Christ an advantage over the rest of humanity, when placed in their proper light, are actually disadvantages.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, he considers Christ as having some advantages stemming from His sinless human nature. These advantages, however, help us to understand better His “identity with sinful, dependent, mortal human beings.” Consequently, “the key

⁶⁴Whidden, “Why Should Jesus be Both Divine and Human?” *Ministry* (March 2003), 24-26.

⁶⁵This uniqueness and identity paradigm is the same in principle as was evidenced in the writings of Edward Heppenstall.

⁶⁶Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 18.

⁶⁷Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 10.

⁶⁸Woodrow Whidden and Remwil Tornalejo. “Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response from an Arminian/Adventist Perspective,” 16.

temptation for Christ was the same as it is for all humans—the desire to go it alone and depend upon self rather than to lean upon divinely imputed and imparted power.”

Furthermore, he emphasizes that one does not need to have natural sinful tendencies in order to sin—Adam and Eve did not have them, nor did the angels who sinned. Then Christ’s coming “into this world with a neutralized, sinful nature did not automatically free Him from temptation to sin.”⁶⁹

Whidden further argues for the identity of Christ with the rest of humanity from the perspective of the incarnation. To him, it is important to note that it was necessary for Christ to clothe His divinity with humanity, since it would not have been possible for sinful human beings to behold Him otherwise. He sees four other important implications: first, had Christ not become human, His sacrificial death would not have been possible because divinity cannot die. Second, in order for Him to be an example to humanity—showing the possibility of overcoming temptation—Christ had to become human. Third, His human nature had to be sinless and His obedience perfect in order for His atoning sacrifice to be accepted, since any trace of sin in Him would have disqualified Him from being substitute and sacrifice. Fourth, the combination of “His victorious humanity and self-sacrificing [*sic*] deity uniquely fitted Him to be the ‘one mediator between God and men.’” Because of His full humanity He can help humankind and because of His full

⁶⁹Woodrow Whidden and Remwil Tornalejo. “Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response from an Arminian/Adventist Perspective,” 17.

divinity He can be Advocate to the Father.⁷⁰ Therefore, even in His identity with the rest of the human family one can see His uniqueness.

As regards the incarnation, Whidden argues against the postlapsarian position which tends to see Christ as being born converted. To him such a position can be called the “‘immaculate reception’ of sinless nature due to a pre-natal gift of conversion.”⁷¹ From his perspective, if Christ was born “converted” and as such was able to stay away from committing sinful acts until He reached the age of accountability, then He actually had an advantage over everyone else since they have to struggle with “habituated sinning.”⁷² Furthermore, if Jesus, during the incarnation, had to be exactly as the rest of humanity then how can He identify with the habitual sinner since He was never such?⁷³

Quoting Eric Webster with approval, Whidden argues against the postlapsarian position from the basis of the universality of human sin. Every human being, with the exception of Christ has sinned. And, even though Christ knew from experience what it is like to resist temptation, He did not know from experience what it is like to experience temptation from habitual sinning—something which every other human being experiences. Nevertheless, Christ still has the power to give sanctifying grace to the

⁷⁰Whidden, “Why Should Jesus be Both Divine and Human?” *Ministry* (March 2003), 24-26. The fact of His dual nature automatically makes Christ different from the rest of the human family.

⁷¹Whidden, “Repairers of the Link: The Humanity of Christ Debate—An Introduction”, 126. If Christ was converted in utero then there is a significant difference between Him and the rest of humanity because no other human being has experienced in utero conversion.

⁷²Not only does the rest of humanity have to contend with habitual sinning, there is no record of any other human being who was born converted. Consequently, if Christ was born converted then He actually had a decided advantage over the rest of humanity.

⁷³Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 15, 16.

habitual sinner. It is then not necessary to bring Christ “down to total wretchedness or meet every specific type of temptation to be our victorious human Exemplar.”⁷⁴

To him Jesus indeed had an “identity” with humanity and as a result experienced our infirmities. He considers that to be something worth affirming. At the same time, however, he does not want to take this “identity” too far. Christ is both a sinless substitute and a victorious helper.⁷⁵ For that reason, Whidden proposes that it may be useful to consider Christ’s sinlessness as belonging to the category of mystery. To him it can be placed in the same bracket as the fact of Him having two natures in one person. Additionally, both the prelapsarian and postlapsarian views of Christ’s human nature end with the same result—a Christ who never sinned. Furthermore, since the fall of humanity, Christ is the only person who has been able to live a sinless life.⁷⁶ However, if Christ’s human nature is not exactly the same as the rest of humanity does that not limit His work for humanity?

Whidden sees no limitation on Christ’s work for humanity even though His human nature is not exactly the same as the rest of humanity. Commenting on the notion that Christ “can only redeem that which He assumes,” he considers there to be a bit of truth in it, but, at the same time, this notion has its challenges. One such challenge relates

⁷⁴Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’”, 63, 64. Indeed if Christ has to identify with sinful humanity in every iota then He must of necessity experienced overcoming habitual sinning. Simultaneously, there is a bit of a conundrum created as regards Christ and overcoming *temptation* and *sin*. One can argue that Christ, with a sinless human nature, overcame temptation but not sin since He never sinned. And since He never sinned how then can He be an example in overcoming sin? Nevertheless, He is an example in overcoming temptation since although severely tempted by the devil He was victorious.

⁷⁵Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry*, (October 1993), 7, 8.

⁷⁶Whidden and Tornalejo, “Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response From an Arminian/Adventist Perspective,” 13, 14.

to the atonement—is it possible for Jesus to be sinless atonement provider while at the same time assuming sin?⁷⁷ Therefore, if Christ in His humanity assumed a sinful nature then there would be dire implications for the atonement. Resultantly, Christ must have a unique human nature.

Christ Must Be Unique in His Humanity

Whidden postulates that, to save humanity, Christ had to be unique in His own humanity,⁷⁸ and that, for Him to provide atonement, His sinlessness is just as important as His deity.⁷⁹ In order for Christ to provide the atoning sacrifice for sin as well as administer the “effects” of His atonement in “His heavenly intercession,” He must of

⁷⁷Whidden and Tornalejo, “Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response From an Arminian/Adventist Perspective,” 19. Although there is a tendency to use the argument concerning that which Christ assumed among some commentators of the postlapsarian ilk, truth be told the statement is not an argument for the postlapsarian nature of Christ. Gregory of Nazianzus was arguing against Apollinarius, who limited the humanity of Christ to His body but not His soul/mind. For Gregory, this could not be so. Christ must have a human mind in order to heal the human mind.

The full text reads: “If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole. Let them not, then, begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Saviour only with bones and nerves and the portraiture of humanity. For if His Manhood is without soul, even the Arians admit this, that they may attribute His Passion to the Godhead, as that which gives motion to the body is also that which suffers. But if He has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is He man, for man is not a mindless animal? And this would necessarily involve that while His form and tabernacle was human, His soul should be that of a horse or an ox, or some other of the brute creation. This, then, would be what He saves; and I have been deceived by the Truth, and led to boast of an honour which had been bestowed upon another. But if His Manhood is intellectual and nor without mind, let them cease to be thus really mindless.”
http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/gregoryofnaz_critique_of_apollinarianism.htm (accessed August 30, 2022).

⁷⁸Whidden, “Repairers of the Broken Link,” 142.

⁷⁹Whidden, “Repairers of the Broken Link,” 142. There is a more extensive treatment of Whidden’s view of the nature of Christ and the atonement later in this chapter.

necessity been sinless in nature and character.⁸⁰ And in that regard, Whidden adduces two central aspects of Christ's atonement.

Christ's perfect obedience (the active element) to God's law, combined with His sacrificial death (the passive element), made provision for forgiveness and reconciliation for the entire human family. Christ's complete humanity and deity were instrumental in actively satisfying divine justice.⁸¹ Additionally the active and passive elements of His life and death are both important. His *active* obedience was necessary to conform to the "demands of God's loving nature" and His *passive* sacrifice "satisfied the penalty of God's loving justice as our sin-bearing Substitute." Consequently, since both the active and passive demands of God's justice have been met, God can provide forgiveness to penitent sinners.⁸²

He repeats this link between the sinless nature of Christ and the atonement by asking whether it were possible for Jesus to "have a *nature just like ours* and still be our interceding advocate and high priest?" If we human beings, burdened with "our defiled and corrupt channels of humanity," are in constant need of Jesus intercession, could He "*intercede for us if His human nature was also defiled and corrupt?*" To him that question elicits a "resounding no!" (emphases in the original).⁸³ As such, it could not have been possible for Jesus to save babies, who are born with an "'inheritance' of

⁸⁰Whidden, "Repairers of the Broken Link," 141.

⁸¹In his understanding the atonement is only complete within the context of Christ's death being used to "legally satisfy the demands of divine justice [and] by having the actual sins of the world imputed to Him..." See Whidden and Tornalejo, "Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response from an Arminian/Adventist Perspective," 23.

⁸²Whidden, "Seventh-day Adventists and the Dynamics of Salvation," 6.

⁸³Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 72.

‘selfishness,’ had He come into the world in the same condition as they are.⁸⁴ Therefore Christ had to have a sinless human nature because without such, for Whidden, human salvation would not have been possible. Consequently, he argues:

Jesus was sufficiently like us in nature (a deep identity) to really be able to identify with our struggles in temptation and give us every victory needed to make it through to the kingdom, and yet He was also sufficiently unlike us (a profound uniqueness) to be able to be sinless in nature and performance and be our fully satisfactory, sinless substitute.’⁸⁵

Thus, having established Whidden’s understanding of the human nature of Christ, we now have a framework for understanding his interpretation of Ellen White’s writings on the humanity of Christ.

Whidden’s Interpretation of Ellen White’s Writings on the Humanity of Christ

Whidden acknowledges a close relationship between Ellen White’s Christology and soteriology. Therefore, her soteriology must be understood within the context of her Christology. This close relationship is further amplified when dealing with the humanity of Christ, coupled with the sanctification and perfection of the believer.⁸⁶ To him Ellen White says more on Jesus’ humanity than Scripture. Nevertheless, even though she makes many statements on the issue one can only dogmatically affirm her portrayal of his genuine humanity and the reality of His temptations from her writings.⁸⁷ In his understanding, Ellen White’s Christology is highly nuanced and “delicately traces a very

⁸⁴Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 71.

⁸⁵Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” (Emphases in the original)

⁸⁶Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 156.

⁸⁷Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 29.

fine line between seeing Christ as somehow *affected* by sin, but not in any way *infected* with it in either His ‘propensities,’ thoughts or actions.’⁸⁸

As far as Whidden is concerned, the central issue with regard to Ellen White and the humanity of Christ is “how much like sinful humanity was Christ’s humanity?”⁸⁹ Interestingly enough, he identifies the humanity of Christ as the “most difficult and challenging theme” in her writings. The degree of difficulty is inherent in the depth of the subject. He quotes her statement in *The Youth’s Instructor*, October 13, 1898⁹⁰ in order to highlight the importance she placed on the subject.⁹¹ He identifies three contributing factors which make the subject even more challenging. They are: (1) the volume of her writings; (2) the lack of systematic treatment on the subject in any of her published works; and (3) the complex statements which provide a certain level of tension between “*uniqueness*” and “*identity*” as per the humanity of Christ in her writings.⁹²

⁸⁸Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 30.

⁸⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 157. One can interpret this statement to mean that Whidden begins with a bias and is thus seeking to support a bias towards a prelapsarian position. However, on the other hand, one can also interpret the statement to mean he begins with an open mind and is seeking to find out the extent to which her writings are willing to go with regard to the humanity of Christ.

⁹⁰See, Ellen White, “Search the Scriptures,” *The Youth’s Instructor* (October 13, 1898). “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. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where on thou standest is holy ground.” We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.”

⁹¹Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 11.

⁹²Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 13, 14.

It is therefore clear that Whidden uses the identity and uniqueness couplet in his understanding of White's writings of Ellen White on the human nature of Christ. With that in mind, the point of focus for a major part of the rest of this chapter is this identity/uniqueness paradigm. However, one of the more technical aspects of the entire debate is the use of particular terms. Therefore, before getting into the identity/uniqueness paradigm, Whidden's understanding of particular terms on the human nature of Christ comes to the fore.

Definition of Terms

It is important for one to have a proper understanding of highly technical matters. This holds true for the human nature of Christ within the writings of Ellen White. And although the debate is not about nomenclature, it certainly comes to the fore in a rather significant way.⁹³

Whidden investigated her use of technical terms such as

'propensities,' 'tendencies,' 'inclinations,' 'passions,' 'bent,' 'corruption,' [and] 'depravity' on the humanity of Christ both in direct statements and in other literary settings. Based upon his investigation he concludes that "she never, ever *directly* says that Christ took 'evil,' 'corrupt' and 'depraved' 'propensities,' 'tendencies,' 'inclinations,' 'passions,' or 'bents' to or of sin." Furthermore, he sees no instance where she applied the terms "'corruption' (or 'corrupt'), 'vile,' 'depravity,' (or 'depraved'), pollution' (or 'polluted') to either His nature or His actions. [Emphasis in the original.]"⁹⁴

⁹³As we have seen in chapter two, there is not much difference among the various commentators on the humanity of Christ within Adventism. However, at times similar expressions can mean different things to different individuals.

⁹⁴Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 30, 31.

In dealing with the issue of terminology, Whidden disagrees with Ralph Larson's distinction between Ellen White's use of the words "sinful" and "sinfulness." According to Larson, she uses "sinful" to indicate tendencies, proclivities, whereas she uses "sinfulness" to show actual participation in sin.⁹⁵ Whidden disagrees with what he calls Larson's "theology by 'Dictionary'" as a concept, as well as his denotation of the words sinful and sinfulness. According to Whidden, with "sinful" and "sinfulness," one is actually dealing with two different parts of speech and as such the meaning of the word does not change.⁹⁶ Additionally, when she speaks of Christ having "man's feeble faculties,"⁹⁷ Whidden understands her to be speaking about human "'frailty,' 'infirmity' and 'weakness.'"⁹⁸

Citing Jean Zurcher, Whidden acknowledges that Ellen White uses expressions such as "'sinful' and 'fallen'" in describing Jesus' human nature. (According to Zurcher, Ellen White uses those, and similar terms, around 400 times.)⁹⁹ Although Whidden admits that the terms are indeed "problematic," he simultaneously insists that they need to be interpreted. Furthermore, he holds out the possibility of Ellen White placing an emphasis upon Christ's nature as being "*affected* by sin in the sense of weakened

⁹⁵See Ralph Larson, *The Word was Made Flesh: One Hundred Years of Seventh-day Adventist Christology 1852-1952* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services Incorporated, 1986), 15-17.

⁹⁶Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 164.

⁹⁷"He who was one with the Father stepped down from the glorious throne in heaven, laid aside his royal robe and crown, and clothed his divinity with humanity, thus bringing himself to the level of *man's feeble faculties*. "For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Ellen White, "The Inestimable Gift," *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1888, par. 2, emphasis added.

⁹⁸Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 181.

⁹⁹See Jean Zurcher, *Touched with Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999).

physical and nervous energy resources” (emphasis in the original).¹⁰⁰ However, based upon Whidden’s definitions of words such as propensities, tendencies, and inclinations, one cannot conclusively argue for the postlapsarian position within the writings of Ellen White.

Having investigated Ellen White’s use of the word “propensity,” and compared it with related expressions such as “bent to’, ‘tendencies,’ inclinations’, ‘passions’, susceptibility,” and other similar words, Whidden discovered that at times she used “propensities,’ ‘tendencies,’ ‘inclinations’ and ‘passions’” in the same sentence or paragraph. Consequently, he believes that, for the most part, they carry the same meaning.¹⁰¹

In that regard, he does not agree with Larson’s conclusion about a distinction between the use of the terms, “passions” and “propensities.” For Larson, there are two classes of passions and propensities. With regard to propensities, on the one hand they refer to something which Christians have, and cannot eliminate, but must keep under control; but on the other hand, they refer to something which Christians must overcome. The second usage is accentuated with the use of qualifying adjectives. According to Larson, Christ had “one class” of passions and propensities, but did not have the other. Larson also identifies two distinct uses of the word “passions” in her writings.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 52, 53.

¹⁰¹Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 70. To him the “Baker Letter” provides one of the most lucid contextual use of the word “propensities.” Due to its magnitude, the “Baker Letter” commands its own sub-section below.

¹⁰²See Larson, *The Word was Made Flesh*, 22-28.

Whidden concludes that the terms indicate a “proneness to do something” but not actually doing it—whether bad or good.¹⁰³

Commenting on White’s expression “‘untainted by corruption’ ‘from His first entrance’ into ‘the world,’”¹⁰⁴ Whidden concludes that this expression has a “strong implication” that Christ was untainted with corruption both with His “sinless inheritance” and “His character development.” He then compares this statement with an earlier one she made on human nature. There she describes human beings in general as having “inbred corruption.”¹⁰⁵ In a footnote on this point he makes a rather salient observation. He notes that Ellen White never used the words “‘corruption,’ ‘vile,’ ‘depravity,’ and ‘pollution’” in reference to Christ.¹⁰⁶ He further believes that in the one place where White used the word “difficulties” in relation to the human nature of Christ, “difficulties” carries the basic idea of “infirmities” or “weaknesses,” based upon her reference to Hebrews 4:15. He also notes that this article, “Changed into His Image,” *Review and*

¹⁰³Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 47, 48.

¹⁰⁴See, Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17 (Silver Spring: White Estate, 1990), 336, 337. “In Christ dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This is why, although He was tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world, from His first entrance into it, untainted by corruption, though surrounded by it. Are we not also to become partakers of that fullness, and is it not thus, and thus only, that we can overcome as He overcame?”

“Those who claim that it was not possible for Christ to sin cannot believe that He really took upon Himself human nature; but was not Christ actually tempted, not only by Satan in the wilderness, but all through His life, from childhood to manhood? In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation under every form, He gave man the perfect example, and through the ample provisions Christ has made, we may become partakers of the divine nature.”

¹⁰⁵“God will be better glorified if we confess the secret, *inbred corruption* of the heart to Jesus alone than if we open its recesses to finite, erring man, who cannot judge righteously unless his heart is constantly imbued with the Spirit of God” (emphasis added). Ellen White, *Testimonies*, 5:645.

¹⁰⁶Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 188, 189.

Herald, April 28, 1891, is the only place in all her published writings where she uses the word “difficulties” with reference to Christ.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, he also notes that Ellen White only uses the term “liabilities” (MS 41, 1892) as an equivalent to “infirmities.” He further notes she only used this term on three occasions in reference to Christ’s human nature.¹⁰⁸ In *Signs of the Times*, November 21, 1892¹⁰⁹ she uses the word “passion,” and Whidden sees it as “a morally non-qualified” use of that word. He then goes on to cite what he considers examples of morally qualified uses of “passions.”¹¹⁰ He sees *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2 pages 509¹¹¹ and 202¹¹²

¹⁰⁷Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 191. See Ellen White, “Changed into His Image,” *Review and Herald*, April 28, 1891, 1. [Hebrews 4:15, quoted.] “We should rejoice that all judgment is given to the Son, because in his humanity he has become acquainted with all the *difficulties* that beset humanity” (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁸Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 194, 195. In the statement that Whidden quotes, White uses “infirmities,” “liabilities” and “temptations.” Since she uses both liabilities and infirmities, then, according to Whidden’s understanding, she is saying the same thing twice. However, if one uses another understanding of her use of the word “liabilities,” then she is not saying the same thing twice.

¹⁰⁹See, Ellen White, “Make All Things According to the Pattern,” *Signs of the Times*, November 21, 1892, 38. “He [Christ] left the glories of heaven, and clothed His divinity with humanity, and subjected Himself to sorrow, and shame, and reproach, abuse, denial, and crucifixion. Though He had all the strength of the passion of humanity, never did He yield to temptation to do that which was not pure and elevating and ennobling.”

¹¹⁰In “Repairers of the Link” Whidden defines exactly what he means when he says morally non-qualified. To him, it means that the reference was dealing with “*normal human desires, appetites, feelings, or emotions rather than perverted desires which naturally tend to break over the bounds of lawful expression.*” (Emphasis in the original.) See, Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 60, 61.

¹¹¹Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1871), 509. “He was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points even as we are.”

¹¹²Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 202. “He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil.”

as presenting morally qualified uses of the word “passions” in reference to Christ’s human nature.¹¹³

He sees evidence of a morally qualified and morally non-qualified uses with the word “inclinations” as well. Thus he compares Letter 8, 1895 (the “Baker Letter”),¹¹⁴ *The Youth’s Instructor*, September 8, 1898¹¹⁵ and *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875.¹¹⁶ With reference to *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875, Whidden believes that Ellen White used the word “inclination,” to mean Christ had a “natural human tendency (not ‘evil,’ ‘sinful,’ or ‘lustful’) to use the advantage of his inherent divine power.” This, in turn, is contrasted with the “corrupt tendencies, propensities, and inclinations” with which the rest of humanity is born. Whidden believes Ellen White used the word in a “morally neutral way” in *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875, but morally qualified in the first two.¹¹⁷

“Susceptibilities” is another important word in treating with the human nature of Christ. Whidden equates her use of the word “susceptibilities” in *Review and Herald*, February 10, 1885, with “human infirmities and desires.”¹¹⁸ He carefully notes her use of the term “wretchedness of fallen man” in *Review and Herald*, August 4, 1874. In doing

¹¹³Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 195, 196.

¹¹⁴“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.” Ellen White, to W.L.H. Baker, Letter 8, 1895 (February 9, 1896), paragraph 16 (cf. paragraphs 14-19), online at https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_Lt8-1895¶=6474.1 (accessed November 2, 2021).

¹¹⁵Ellen White, “And the Grace of God Was upon Him,” *The Youth’s Instructor*, September 8, 1898. “His inclination to right was a constant gratification to his parents.”

¹¹⁶Ellen White, “The Temptation of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1875, 107. “Christ was put to the closest test, requiring the strength of all his faculties to resist the inclination when in danger, to use his power to deliver himself from peril, and triumph over the power of the prince of darkness.”

¹¹⁷Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 63, 64.

¹¹⁸Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 181.

so he mentions that he found no evidence of her ever using that term again in reference to Christ's humanity.¹¹⁹ Her expression "no taint of sin," in Whidden's understanding, can be a reference to either Christ's nature or character. But he thinks it may be more of a reference to character than to nature. Nevertheless, because she speaks of Him preserving his purity and morals, then there is a hint of His sinless nature in the expression. In his footnote accompanying this statement, he concludes that the expression has three applications: first to His character, second both His nature and character, and third His nature.¹²⁰ Having examined Whidden's definitions/understanding of some of the key technical terms within Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ, it is clear that one's overall framework comes to the fore when interpreting her writings on the topic. With that in mind, the focus now turns to his identity and uniqueness paradigm.

Christ's Identity with Humanity

That during the incarnation, Christ identified Himself with humanity is undisputed. The question is, "to what extent did He identify with sinful humanity?" And for this study, "to what extent does Ellen White portray His identity with sinful humanity?"

Whidden sees Ellen White as teaching that, as a human being, "Christ *was not just exactly like* fallen humans." Yet, at the same time, "He *was enough like* them to identify" with their struggles with temptations. He was also enough unlike every other human

¹¹⁹Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 172.

¹²⁰Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 168, 169.

being to be humanity's "sinless, substitutionary sacrifice" (emphases in the original).¹²¹ Christ's identity with humanity was of such a depth that it resulted in Him having "lessened capacity." However, although Christ had "*lessened capacity*," that by no means involved Him ever "yielding to corruption," or having "inclinations to corruption," "a taint of sin," or "an evil propensity" in His sinless "spiritual nature."¹²²

Whidden considers *The Desire of Ages*, 117,¹²³ as one of the strongest Ellen White alleged post-fall statements.¹²⁴ Thus, he sees a strong case for identity between Christ and us. He also notes the contrast between Christ during the incarnation and Adam before the fall. He therefore is of the view that Ellen White seems to imply "that Christ took human nature without the 'original state of purity and uprightness' of Adam before the Fall, and His human nature was marked by 'moral degeneracy' and 'beset with 'infirmities and degeneracy' that had sunk 'lower in the scale of moral worth.'"¹²⁵ To him her exact meaning in that expression is somewhat elusive. However, he believes that the

¹²¹Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 58.

¹²²Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 58.

¹²³"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. Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, 117.

¹²⁴Whidden, "Repairers of the Link," 92, 93.

¹²⁵The full statement reads: "Satan had pointed to Adam's sin as proof that God's law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation." Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1898) 117.

essence of her statement was to show Christ's humanity had "lessened capacity" thus He was "*affected by sin*" but it was "not *infected* with natural tendencies or propensities to sin" (emphases in the original).¹²⁶

Similarly, her statement in *Manuscript Release*, 16:182¹²⁷ is recognized as a case of Ellen White emphasizing identity between Christ and the rest of humanity. Whidden stresses the importance of her words "Christ took our nature, fallen but not corrupted, and would not be corrupted unless He received the words of Satan."¹²⁸ As regards her profuse use of the terms "sinful" and "fallen" in reference to Christ's nature, Whidden posits the view that those expressions ought to be interpreted in light of other evidence in her writings. He also adduces that even the post-fall camp interprets those expressions. Consequently, the question is not just one of interpretation, but of finding the most accurate interpretation within the context of all of Ellen White's writing on the subject. Interestingly, he admits that the prelapsarian interpretation is not completely "air-tight."¹²⁹

He notes that Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ use the terms "fallen nature," "infirmities," and "weaknesses," more often than any other terms. In that

¹²⁶Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 49-51.

¹²⁷See, Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen White Estate, 1990), 182. "Our Lord was tempted as man is tempted. He was capable of yielding to temptations, as are human beings. His finite nature was pure and spotless, but the divine nature that led Him to say to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" also, was not humanized; neither was humanity deified by the blending or union of the two natures; each retained its essential character and properties."

¹²⁸Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 49-51. That statement plays a critical role in the human nature of Christ debate. Indeed, it demonstrates that Christ human nature was subject to corruption. However, corruption was only going to come if He, Christ, decided to receive "the words of Satan."

regard, Whidden highlights an article where she states that Jesus “knows our infirmities,” but at the same time she was quick to point out that this by no means involved Jesus in sin.¹³⁰ In a footnote on this point, Whidden notes that White used the term “fallen nature” on 11 occasions between 1858 and 1888. From 1889 to 1902 she used that same term on 19 occasions. Between 1863 and 1888 she used the term “infirmities” 15 times and she used it one less time between 1889 and 1902. With regard to the various forms of the word “weaken,” she used it eight times between 1874 and 1888 and on 14 occasions between 1889 and 1902.¹³¹ Simultaneously, he recognizes her strong affirmation of the necessity of Christ having the same nature as humankind. He sees the term “fallen nature” as an important “identity” expression and at the same time highlights her reason for this strong identity—namely in order for Him to be tempted as a human being while at the same time be humanity’s example. He categorizes this as a “sanctificationist application” in her writings on Christ’s human nature.¹³²

Whidden views her statement in *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874¹³³ as her “most comprehensive and foundational statement” on the strong sense of identity

¹²⁹Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 36, 37.

¹³⁰See, Ellen White, “Parents and Children,” *Review and Herald*, January 20, 1863, 59. “I saw that Jesus knows our infirmities, and Himself hath felt their experience in all things but in sin, therefore He hath proportioned a way and a path to our strength and capacity, and like Jacob, hath marched softly and in evenness with the children as they were able to endure, that He might entertain us by the comfort of His company, and be to us a perpetual guide.”

¹³¹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 163.

¹³²Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 191.

¹³³See, Ellen White, “The Temptation of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874, 51. “Christ was not in as favorable a position in the desolate wilderness to endure the temptations of Satan as was Adam when he was tempted in Eden. The Son of God humbled himself and took man's nature after the race had wandered four thousand years from Eden, and from their original state of purity and uprightness. Sin had been making its terrible marks upon the race for ages; and physical, mental, and moral degeneracy prevailed throughout the human family.”

between Christ and the rest of humanity. He believes that this statement, which shows a contrast between Adam and Christ, the second Adam, is difficult to understand completely. Nevertheless, he believes that it shows that Christ had “lessened capacity” when compared to Adam. However, though having less capacity than Adam, this lessened capacity did not include the internal *infection* of sin. (Emphasis in the original.) To shed additional light on the matter, Whidden uses the example of retired basketball great, Michael Jordan. He notes that when Jordan returned to the sport after two years of retirement, though he still possessed the internal “athletic propensities or natural instincts,” the former physical strength, energy, and timing were not there. Furthermore, he notes that there will come—and has come—a time when Jordan will not be at the same place on the scale of athletic prowess. Yet still, his old natural instincts will continue to exist—he just would no longer have the physical strength to exercise them to their fullest.¹³⁴

Whidden sees the above article, *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874, as not only foundational in her Christology, but one that highlights the balance in her thought regarding the humanity of Christ. He sees this article as somewhat tipping the scales in the direction of a fallen nature, and since he admits that she tends to return to this article, she apparently saw the article’s importance in accentuating the profound identity between Christ and humanity.¹³⁵

¹³⁴Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 31, 32. I believe that this is very apt illustration showing the contrast between natural tendencies and physical activities. However, Whidden does not appear to address the issue of moral degeneracy.

¹³⁵Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 33.

Interestingly enough, Whidden does not provide extensive treatment to her statement found in Ms. 1, 1892, (later published in *Selected Messages*, 3:136-141).¹³⁶ This statement, among other things, deals with Satan's charge that human beings, after the fall, are not able to keep God's law. Here White posits the view that Christ "passed over the ground where Adam fell, and endured the temptation in the wilderness, which was a hundredfold stronger than was or ever will be brought to bear upon the human race." She further stated that Christ was victorious over the temptations of the devil while He was a human being.¹³⁷

And speaking about His real humanity, in Ms. 166, December 15, 1898 (later published in *Review and Herald*, July 17, 1900) she says: "Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature." For Whidden this as a clear reference to His nature and not His character since it is done in reference to the nature He took at the incarnation.¹³⁸ In this same manuscript she uses the term "offending nature of man" in reference to the humanity which Christ took. As she uses this term only once, Whidden sees it as somewhat "anomalous" and within its context may be "equivalent to

¹³⁶See, Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, (Washington, D. C: Review and Herald, 1980), 136. "The world's Redeemer passed over the ground where Adam fell because of his disobeying the expressed law of Jehovah; and the only begotten Son of God came to our world as a man, to reveal to the world that men could keep the law of God. Satan, the fallen angel, had declared that no man could keep the law of God after the disobedience of Adam. He claimed the whole race under his control."

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

¹³⁷Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 192, 193. The phrase, "passed over the ground where Adam fell," needs interpretation. If by it means Christ was *in* the same place as was Adam after the fall then He, Christ, had the same nature as the rest of humanity. However, if it means he was tempted in the same manner as was Adam, then, since Adam was tempted before he fell Christ did not need to have a sinful human nature.

¹³⁸Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 222.

‘the fallen race.’ He also holds out the possibility that this statement may be referring to the possibility of Christ committing sin. In the final analysis he believes that what it does *not* mean is clearer than what it *does* mean.¹³⁹

Finally, in his understanding, she maintains Christ’s close identity with other humans by speaking of Christ as an example to other humans, in His overcoming temptations by depending upon the Father. This identity also serves to hush any claim that He, because of what Whidden calls His “sinless human nature,” had an advantage over the rest of humanity.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, in reference to *Selected Messages*, 3:136-141,¹⁴¹ Whidden points out that White taught that the God-man, had no advantage over the rest of humanity in terms of His human nature. Thus, in dealing with temptation Christ was not “‘particularly adapted,’” in either His divine or human nature to obey God’s will.¹⁴² In addition to that, as the God-man, Christ was unique.

Christ’s Human Nature Was Unique

Referencing to Ellen White’s article in *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872, “‘man could not atone for man’ as ‘His sinful, fallen condition would constitute him an

¹³⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 225. Although Whidden acknowledges the difficulty posed by the phrase “offending nature of man,” he does not offer a definitive interpretation of it. It appears that this phrase was a difficult fit for his identity/uniqueness paradigm and he was unwilling to perform any hermeneutical gymnastics in an effort to make it fit. Simultaneously, the phrase in question seems to be a better fit into the postlapsarian interpretation of the humanity of Christ.

¹⁴⁰Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 194.

¹⁴¹“Christ overcame the temptations of Satan as a man. Every man may overcome as Christ overcame.” Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 3:136, par. 3.

¹⁴²Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 44, 45.

imperfect offering,”¹⁴³ Whidden makes the point that this statement should be taken into consideration when one interprets her sinful or fallen nature statements as per Christ. To him, this statement shows that Christ was not in the identical nature as fallen humanity. Since White speaks of human beings, due to their sinful condition, as being unable to be an acceptable offering for sin, then it follows that Christ, in order to be an acceptable offering for sin, had to be sinless in nature as well as action. Consequently, he sees her discussion on the need for a perfect sacrifice as excluding the rest of humanity because of their “sinful, fallen condition,” as well as their humanity. Thus, it was important for Christ to be both human and divine.¹⁴⁴

Since Christ was both human and divine, was there a difference between Him and us as regards temptation? Whidden believes that it was not necessary for Christ “to be born with either a bent to sin or a history of sinning to feel the power of temptation.” He further notes that the basis of Christ’s temptations stemmed from the “possibility of using His full deity to resist the wiles of the devil.” Effectively, Christ’s key temptation was the same as with every other human being—“the desire to go it alone and depend upon self rather than divine, imparted power from above.”¹⁴⁵ One of the striking things about Whidden’s understanding of the humanity of Christ is his willingness to admit to a limited human understanding on the topic. Thus, he argues that both sides of the debate

¹⁴³Ellen White, “The First Advent of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872, par. 3.

¹⁴⁴Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 166, 167.

¹⁴⁵Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 74.

“need to admit that they do not know how to explain the fact that Christ was somehow sinlessly unique in His blended nature as the divine/human Son.”¹⁴⁶

With regard to Christ’s blended nature, he sees Ellen White placing a special emphasis upon this issue in the post-1888 period. For him, this greater emphasis upon the blending of humanity and divinity in Christ’s nature in her writings during this period is the only noteworthy development in her Christology during this period. He further notes a sharper focus upon His divinity than upon His humanity in relation to the blended nature. This idea is further amplified when viewed in light of a statement she made in a sermon on June 19, 1889 (found in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 904) in which she states “Christ could have done nothing during His earthly ministry in saving fallen man if the divine had not been blended with the human.” Based upon his observation, this theme was frequently repeated for the rest of her prophetic ministry.¹⁴⁷

According to Whidden’s analysis, Ellen White, during the period 1896-1902, paid more attention to the uniqueness of Christ than to His identity.¹⁴⁸ Whidden acknowledges six noteworthy statements during the 1896-1902 period that help to affirm the uniqueness aspect of her Christological postulations. (1) *The Youth’s Instructor*, Sept 8, 1898: Christ “was not like all children” because He possessed an “inclination to right.” (2) *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, 173: “He was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family.” (3) *Review and Herald*, July 17, 1900: “Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature.” (4) *Selected*

¹⁴⁶Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 128.

¹⁴⁷Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 40.

¹⁴⁸Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 51, 52.

Messages, bk. 1, 340-344: Believers, though giving their best, still need the merits of Christ. (5) *Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901: “He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man.” To him the focus here is upon what Christ took and not upon that which He developed. (6) *Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1902: “In Him was no guile or sinfulness; He was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon Him our sinful nature.”¹⁴⁹

However, Whidden places a qualifier on the idea of Christ taking upon Himself sinful nature. In Letter 97, November 18, 1898, White wrote: “He was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family.”¹⁵⁰ From this Whidden concludes that the phrase “without a taint of sin” is a reference to the sinless nature with which He was born.¹⁵¹ Additionally, in *Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901, she wrote: “He was to take His position as the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man.” Whidden argues that this statement is not a reference to His character development, but implies that His inheritance was a human nature without its sinfulness.¹⁵²

Since Jesus’ inheritance was a human nature without its sinfulness, His works are meritorious. In that regard, Whidden understands Ellen White to teach a Christ-based approach to merit. Due to human nature—which is polluted by sin—only Jesus’ merits can make good human actions acceptable to God. This need for Jesus’ merits exists

¹⁴⁹Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 54, 55.

¹⁵⁰Ellen White, to “My Brethren in North Fitzroy,” Letter 97, November 18, 1898, reprinted in *Manuscript Releases*, 10:173.

¹⁵¹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 222.

throughout the duration of one's life. Furthermore, not only does human nature pollute good actions but it is incapable of producing perfect performance. Ellen White, at the same time, advocates "perfect obedience" but that is within the context of depending upon Christ.¹⁵³ By contrast, humanity could not provide a meritorious sacrifice because of two shortcomings; first, humanity's fallen sinful condition, and second the mere fact of being human.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it becomes easy to understand his interpretation of her statement in Ms. 50, 1900, later published in *Selected Messages*, 1:344.¹⁵⁵ In his conception, this statement makes a clear distinction between Christ in His human nature and the rest of humanity. For him, even though Jesus, in the heavenly sanctuary, is ministering in His "glorified humanity," He is, in the process purifying the "religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin . . . from true believers." He has to do so since they pass through "corrupt channels" and as a result are unacceptable. Therefore, if Jesus' human nature was exactly the same as those of true believers, then how could He be "an effectual Intercessor" while His humanity was also a

¹⁵²Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 231.

¹⁵³Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 275, 276.

¹⁵⁴Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 29, 30. See also Ellen White, "The First Advent of Christ," *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872, 2. "Man could not atone for man. . . . God made man perfect and upright, and after his transgression *there could be no sacrifice acceptable to God for him, unless the offering made should in value be superior to man as he was in his state of perfection and innocency*" (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁵See, Ellen White, Ms. 50, 1900. "The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned."

corrupt channel?¹⁵⁶ Therefore, there must have been a difference between Christ and the rest of the human family.¹⁵⁷

Whidden also cites White's statement in Ms. 57, 1890, to show both similarity and difference between Christ and us. On the one hand, Christ did indeed take a human nature "identical to our own." However, His human nature was without any "taint of sin." Though He had the "liability to sin," He did not have the "same sinful, corrupt propensities as man." In that light His human nature was "fallen but not corrupted."¹⁵⁸ Whidden concludes that Christ's human nature, spoken of in this quotation, was that nature which He took at the incarnation, not a nature which resulted from His character development.¹⁵⁹ Whidden identifies a similar contrast in her article in *Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884, where she speaks of there being no sin in Christ, whereas other human beings are "sinful by nature."¹⁶⁰

Whidden further posits two striking uniqueness statements from the writings of Ellen White. He first cites *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pages 39 and 88 to show the

¹⁵⁶Whidden, "Repairers of the Link," 122, 123.

¹⁵⁷This is one of the most cogent Ellen White statements, as far as Whidden is concerned, on the human nature of Christ.

¹⁵⁸See, Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16 (Silver Spring: White Estate, 1990), 182. "The divine nature, combined with the human, made Him capable of yielding to Satan's temptations. Here 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. To suppose He was not capable of yielding to temptation places Him where He cannot be a perfect example for man, and the force and the power of this part of Christ's humiliation, which is the most eventful, is no instruction or help to human beings."

¹⁵⁹Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 42.

¹⁶⁰Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 178, 179.

contrast in her writings between Christ and every other human being.¹⁶¹ He then quotes from *Review and Herald*, September 11, 1888¹⁶² to show that Christ had a nature which was more “exalted” than that of the rest of humanity. However, having a more exalted nature than others actually led to His temptations being harder to resist. Whidden considers this statement as being somewhat “elusive,” but the point of emphasis is that Christ did *not* have an advantage as a result of His more exalted nature.¹⁶³

However, even though He did *not* have an advantage over the rest of humanity, Christ was bereft of any taint of sin, thus making Him unique. Christ’s “uniqueness” is also highlighted in White’s statement in Manuscript 18, 1898,¹⁶⁴ as regards Jesus’ lack of physical defects. This is viewed in light of the fact that other human beings have physical

¹⁶¹See, Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 4 vols. (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1870-1884), 2:39, 88. “In Christ were united the human and the divine. His mission was to reconcile God to man, and man to God. His work was to unite the finite with the Infinite. This was the only way in which fallen men could be exalted, through the merits of the blood of Christ, to be partakers of the divine nature.”

“The great work of redemption could be carried out only by the Redeemer taking the place of fallen man. Burdened with the sins of the world, he must go over the ground where Adam stumbled. He must take up the work just where Adam failed, and endure a test of the same character, but infinitely more severe than that which had vanquished him. It is impossible for man to fully comprehend the strength of Satan’s temptations to our Saviour. Every enticement to evil, which men find so difficult to resist, was brought to bear upon the Son of God in as much greater degree as his character was superior to that of fallen man.”

¹⁶²See, Ellen White, “The Work of the Minister,” *Review and Herald*, September 11, 1888, 578. “Christ was not insensible to ignominy and disgrace. He felt it all most bitterly. He felt it as much more deeply and acutely than we can feel suffering, as His nature was more exalted, and pure, and holy than that of the sinful race for whom He suffered.”

¹⁶³Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 176, 177.

¹⁶⁴See, Ellen White, Manuscript 18, 1898. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/5993.1#2> (accessed July 25, 2022). “In coming to the world in human form, in becoming subject to the law, in revealing to men that He bore their sickness, their sorrow, their guilt, Christ did not become a sinner. He was pure and uncontaminated by any disease. Not one stain of sin was found upon Him.... He who was in the health of perfect manhood was as one afflicted with them.”

defects.¹⁶⁵ In *Desire of Ages*, 71, where White speaks about Christ's childhood and the preservation of His purity, Whidden identifies a difference between Christ and the rest of humanity. Later in the same work, page 123, she says: "There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry." And even though Whidden admits that this is not a clear statement on a lack of inclination to sin, he notes that she does not use it in reference to other human beings.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, Christ's uniqueness is emphasized by Ellen White in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2: 202.¹⁶⁷ Whidden detects in this statement a difference between Christ and the rest of humanity, since White points out that "His nature recoiled from evil." Whidden's understands that recoiling of Christ's nature from evil, as showing the sinlessness of His nature.¹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, even though He had a sinless human nature, Christ did not have an advantage over the rest of humanity. Ellen White's statements in *Spirit of Prophecy* 2:39, 88, portray Christ as enduring temptations to a much greater degree than every other human being. This was due to His superior character. Whidden sees evidence that at times, in reference to Christ, White used the word "nature" in the same manner as "character." If His superior character/nature made it more difficult to resist temptation,

¹⁶⁵Interestingly enough, Whidden references the work of Graybill, Johns, and Poirier, on the similarities between Ellen White's expressions on the human nature of Christ and those of Henry Melvill, and accepts their conclusion. He also cites Webster, *Crosscurrents*, 128, with approval, on the same matter. Thus, as regards Christ, Whidden sees Him as having "innocent infirmities" but not "sinful propensities." This leads one to wonder if physical defects are not included among innocent infirmities. (See Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 48, 49.)

¹⁶⁶Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 220.

¹⁶⁷See, Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1868-1909), 2:202. "He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil."

¹⁶⁸Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 27.

then His sinless character and nature by no means gave Him an advantage over the rest of humanity.¹⁶⁹ In the *Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884, Whidden sees White painting a contrast between Christ and humans when she says that there was “no sin in Him.” To Whidden, this statement implies a sinless nature as compared to human beings who are ‘sinful by nature.’¹⁷⁰

And speaking about His nature, Whidden, while recognizing Ellen White’s use of the term “fallen nature” in reference to Christ, sees a difference between her use of this term in relation to Christ as compared to other human beings. He notes her statement in *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872¹⁷¹ as having a high degree of importance. In his understanding, this statement makes it clear that when she speaks about Christ’s fallen nature, it is not the same as when she speaks about fallen human nature. If they were the same, then could any human being have been fit, via sinless performance, to atone for the rest of humanity? But she expressly stated that ‘man could not atone for man,’ since “his sinful, fallen condition would constitute him an imperfect offering.”¹⁷² Additionally, even the sinless state Adam was in before the fall, was not sufficient to be an acceptable atoning sacrifice for sin. In order to be a sufficient sacrifice, the offering must of necessity be superior that of man in his sinless state. Therefore, only Christ, the God-

¹⁶⁹Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 34.

¹⁷⁰Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 34, 35.

¹⁷¹See, Ellen White, “The First Advent of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872, 2. “Man could not atone for man. His sinful, fallen condition would constitute him an imperfect offering, an atoning sacrifice of less value than Adam before his fall. God made man perfect and upright, and after his transgression *there could be no sacrifice acceptable to God for him, unless the offering made should in value be superior to man as he was in his state of perfection and innocency*” (emphasis added).

¹⁷²Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 29.

man,¹⁷³ was able to be a sufficient sacrifice.¹⁷⁴ As the God-man, Christ was unique, and His humanity was also unique. This uniqueness, according to Whidden, is best portrayed by Ellen White in “The Baker Letter.”¹⁷⁵

“The Baker Letter,”¹⁷⁶ for Whidden, provides the “most forceful and controversial expression” of uniqueness in Ellen White’s writings. As a result, he believes that one

¹⁷³Emphasizing the importance of Christ’s dual nature as regards the atonement, Whidden looks at Ellen White’s statement found in the Ms. 6, 1892. In this statement she states: “If we do our best, exercise our entrusted capabilities with the sole purpose of doing our Master’s work and promoting His glory, the smallest talent, the humblest service, may become a consecrated gift, made acceptable by the fragrance of His own merit.” Whidden then argues that not even believers have the necessary merits. (See Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White, 189.)

¹⁷⁴Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 29.

¹⁷⁵Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 207, 208.

¹⁷⁶Since the Christological section of this missive from Ellen White is so pivotal, it is quoted in its entirety. See, Ellen White, “Lt. 8, 1895,” *Manuscript Releases* (Washington, DC: White Estate, 1993), 13:18-20. “Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin, his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.”

“Bro. Baker, avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God; for, said the angel, “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Highest; and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his Father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

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

cannot underestimate its importance in the discussion of Ellen White's Christology.¹⁷⁷

Interestingly enough, he posits the view that even though that communiqué brings a "very important contribution" to the debate on the humanity of Christ, at the same time it is not "absolutely essential to the establishment of Ellen White's position."¹⁷⁸

Whidden believes that "The Baker Letter" has no "clear and immediate contextual background." He makes this assertion within the context of analyzing attempts made by Lyell Vernon Heise, Ralph Larson, and LeRoy Moore to establish a contextual background.¹⁷⁹ He believes Ellen White was not necessarily rebuking anyone other than Baker in the part of the letter dealing with his Christology. He further points out that even though during her lifetime there were those who held Arian views, and though she was clearly not Arian, she did not rebuke any. To him, her rebukes came only when Adventist preachers presented postulations contrary to Adventist distinctive doctrines. In that light, he hastens to add that her rebukes, or lack thereof, are not "sure evidence as to the true

The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know. We are to keep our feet on the rock, Christ Jesus, as God revealed in humanity."

"I perceive that there is danger in approaching subjects which dwell on the humanity of the Son of the infinite God. He did humble Himself when He saw He was in fashion as a man, that He might understand the force of all temptations wherewith man is beset."

"The first Adam fell: the second Adam held fast to God and His word under the most trying circumstances, and His faith in His Father's goodness, mercy, and love did not waver for one moment. "It is written" was His weapon of resistance, and it is the sword of the Spirit which every human being is to use. "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"—nothing to respond to temptation. Not one occasion has been given in response to His manifold temptations. Not once did Christ step on Satan's ground, to give him any advantage. Satan found nothing in Him to encourage his advances."

¹⁷⁷Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 207, 208.

¹⁷⁸Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 209.

¹⁷⁹Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 213.

nature of her thought on Adventist matters that were not a part of “Present Truth”—and the human nature of Christ falls among these non-distinctive doctrines.¹⁸⁰

With that in mind, Whidden focuses attention upon her use of the word “propensity” in the letter. He finds that the “Baker Letter” provides one of the most lucid contextual uses of the word “propensities.”¹⁸¹ Thus he argues that the expressions “‘propensities of sin,’ inherent propensities of disobedience,’ and ‘an evil propensity’” all describe that with which “Adam’s posterity are “‘born’ . . . (their natural inheritance), but Christ clearly was not born with such natural proclivities to sin.”¹⁸² From Whidden’s point of view, more often than not, when Ellen White uses the word “propensities” it is unclear whether she has in mind a proclivity or the commission of an act. However, he believes that “The Baker Letter” provides the evidence needed to understand her use of the word “propensities.”¹⁸³

From his perspective, in “The Baker Letter” Ellen White demonstrates that Christ possessed neither an “inclination to corruption,” nor ever participated in corruption. Furthermore, he sees a close relation, yet clearly distinguishable difference, between an inclination to do something and actually yielding to the act.¹⁸⁴ In that regard he disagrees with those within the postlapsarian camp who maintain that when Ellen White spoke about “propensity” in her letter to Baker she had actual participation in sin in mind. To

¹⁸⁰Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 210, 211.

¹⁸¹Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 70.

¹⁸²Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 214.

¹⁸³Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 72.

¹⁸⁴Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 81.

him, the things with which humans are born are better understood to mean “native dispositions” and not necessarily one’s actions or character.¹⁸⁵ He further believes that in the pericope under examination the words “inclination” and “propensity” carry the same meaning. Furthermore, dictionaries and thesauruses from Ellen White’s time as well as contemporary times, equate inclination, propensity, and tendency. For that reason, he does not see any evidence from dictionaries to support the postlapsarian definition of “propensity” as “actual participation in sin.” Therefore, the point of emphasis with those expressions is “natural tendencies” and Christ did not have any natural tendency to sin—unlike the rest of Adam’s posterity.¹⁸⁶ He thus understands Ellen White to disagree clearly with any view linking Christ to sin by action or giving Him any inclination to corruption.¹⁸⁷

Taking into consideration the “Adam/Christ comparison,” he argues that the phrases ““created ... without a taint of sin upon him,”” in reference to Adam, and ““no taint of ... corruption,”” in reference to Christ, are a reference to Christ’s human nature. This is then contrasted with corrupt human nature. Additionally, he argues that the phrases ““inclination to corruption’ (which Christ did not have)” and “a taint of...corruption” mean the same thing. Consequently, he concludes that the word “inclination” as used by Ellen White in this instance, carries the same meaning as “propensity.” By extension this phrase can also be a reference to “natural tendencies,

¹⁸⁵Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 82.

¹⁸⁶Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 85.

¹⁸⁷Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 86, 87.

proclivities or leanings towards sin.” Furthermore, Christ, unlike the rest of Adam’s posterity, did not have those things.¹⁸⁸

Additionally, from his perspective, Ellen White’s employment of the words “that Holy Thing” (Luke 1:34, 35), provides strong testimony for Christ’s “unique holiness” which accompanied both His conception and birth.¹⁸⁹ In that regard, Whidden sees Ellen White as observing mystery in the fact that Christ, unlike every other human being, was sinless. This he places within the larger context of the mystery of the incarnation, and for this reason she makes no attempt to unravel the mystery.¹⁹⁰

However, why is it that there is such a strong impulse within Seventh-day Adventism to unravel this mystery? Why is the desire to view Christ’s humanity as precisely the same as the rest of humanity so strong? In order to understand that desire it is imperative to look at perfection and Last Generation Theology within Adventism.

Perfection and Last Generation Theology

Perfection and Last Generation Theology are important and closely related topics within Adventism. For Whidden, the meaning of perfection stands at the root of all soteriological battles within Adventism.¹⁹¹ Whidden also believes it is important for Adventism to understand the importance of believers avoiding sin, while at the same time having their gaze steadfast upon Jesus. In that regard, he tends to place perfection within

¹⁸⁸Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 215, 216.

¹⁸⁹Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 85, 86.

¹⁹⁰Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 86.

¹⁹¹Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 8.

the realm of “attitude” rather than “performance.” Furthermore, he tends to think that perfection involves complete victory over both known and unknown sin. At the same time, he believes that God does not reveal all our defects to us at one time.¹⁹² With that in mind he proposes the following definition of perfection:

*Perfection is to follow Jesus, trust His merits, and be transformed by His empowering Spirit; to be inspired by His example and do the known duties that lie nearest at hand, not excusing or cherishing sin; and to be open to God's providence in the conviction of sin, new duties, and joyous service and witness to others.*¹⁹³

Whidden identifies six facets of Christian perfection. First, is legal perfection which comes at justification where the penitent sinner is declared righteous based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ. Second, he sees “dynamic growth in grace.” However, this growth does not in any way involve confidence in one’s own abilities. Consequently, the Christian lacks the resources, the natural ability, to produce any manner of righteousness. Thus, united in Christ, the believer’s faith works by love leading to “‘perfect’ obedience.” Third, perfection involves the avoidance of acts and attitudes of willful sinning. Sanctification is a grace-filled disciplining process for the believer. He places the fourth and fifth facets of perfection in close proximity to each other. Thus, the fourth involves the experience of the saints during earth’s final crisis and the fifth is that which they experience at glorification, at the Second Coming. Finally, Whidden sees a facet of perfection through eternity—namely continued character growth.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹²Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry*, October 1993, 5-9.

¹⁹³“Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” (Emphasis in the original). The length of his definition alone provides a hint to his desire to avoid a rigid definition of perfection.

¹⁹⁴Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 86-91.

With regard to Last Generation Theology, Whidden believes that, just as those faithful to God are kept by faith in Him through the ages of time, so too will those who are living at the end of time be kept by faith in Him.¹⁹⁵ However, those believers who endure the closing scenes of earth's history have the same faith as those who die before the Second Advent. Nevertheless, the former group will have to go through something which no other group of believers has ever endured. Both groups have the same faith but those who endure the close of probation will experience greater testing—second only to that which Jesus endured.¹⁹⁶ During Jesus' trial in Gethsemane He agonized for the assurance of God's approval. However, there was none. Therefore, He had to rely by faith upon the past assurances of His Father's approval. In Whidden's estimation, this is somewhat akin to that which believers living at the close of probation will have to do and endure.¹⁹⁷

There is one other significant purpose accomplished during the closing scenes of earth's history. During this time the saints will experience, and the on-looking universe will witness, a final display of Satan's nefarious deeds.¹⁹⁸ He believes that if the Last Generation has to refute Satan's charge against God then the advocates for Last Generation Theology are unwittingly arguing that Jesus had an advantage over the rest of humanity and as a result He is not the best example for overcoming temptation

¹⁹⁵Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 133.

¹⁹⁶Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 135, 136. Here Whidden is in agreement with proponents of Last Generation Theology.

¹⁹⁷Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 140, 141.

¹⁹⁸Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 143. Here Whidden is responding to the various versions of Last Generation Theology within Adventism, while presenting his alternative version.

perfectly.¹⁹⁹ In his estimation, during the time of trouble believers will have to deal with temptations while at the same time propensities will remain but that will not be the issue facing believers. Though possessing propensities, believers place their trust upon Christ for salvation and not upon themselves.²⁰⁰

With regard to the “Harvest Principle,” Whidden believes that God does not need the church to be His witness for Christ, rather, He has chosen to use it for the purpose of mission. Making the plan of redemption known, he opines, is not dependent upon the church. Instead of needing the church to vindicate Him against Satan’s charges, what God desires from it is “loving witness” to the world. He considers Ellen White to be teaching that God needs the church in a “*supplementary*” and not “*essential*” manner (emphases in the original).²⁰¹ He takes further issue with the Harvest Principle because, to him, it tends to move away from what Christ has done and emphasize what humans do; it makes human effort essential for the atonement thereby limiting what Christ has done on the cross; it makes Christ’s return dependent upon the church being ready instead of His return being placed within His own purview.²⁰² In his understanding, although God has chosen the church to witness of Christ in a missionary way, and He needs its witness to Christ, Whidden believes that God is neither finally nor fully dependent upon the church in the accomplishment of His redemptive goal. Therefore, His dealings with His

¹⁹⁹Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 146.

²⁰⁰Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 147.

²⁰¹Whidden, “The Vindication of God and ‘The Harvest Principle,’” *Ministry*, October 1994, 44-47.

²⁰²Whidden, “The Vindication of God and ‘The Harvest Principle,’” 44-47.

people “are conditional upon their response.” So what God really desires is the church’s loving witness and not for it to “get Him off the hook of Satan’s charges.”²⁰³

Regarding perfection and Last Generation Theology, Whidden considers Ellen White’s writings on character development,²⁰⁴ as related to the Christ’s intercessory work and the time of trouble as “some of the most problematic passages in her writings on the subject of perfection.”²⁰⁵ In that light, concerning *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 69,²⁰⁶ he argues that even though Ellen White speaks of God longing for the ““manifestation of Himself in His church,”” she does not speak of an absolute necessity.²⁰⁷ At the same time Whidden recognizes that as preparation for the imminent Second Coming of Christ, Ellen White stressed the importance of sanctified Christian character development. Failure to develop sanctified Christian characters can actually lead to a delay in the Second Coming of Christ. By the same token, the sooner believers develop sanctified characters, the sooner Christ can hasten His return.²⁰⁸

Whidden simultaneously believes Ellen White’s conception of the sinful condition of human beings has “critical implications” as regards our understanding of what she has to say about perfection. Her soteriology has no room for meritorious

²⁰³Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 136.

²⁰⁴At times Whidden uses the term “character development” as a synonym for Christian perfection.

²⁰⁵Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 357.

²⁰⁶See, Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1900), 69. “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.”

²⁰⁷Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 136.

²⁰⁸Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 149.

actions—even from sanctified believers—since she believes that all will remain with their sinful natures until they are glorified. Therefore, it is important for one to note her support for character perfection and not “*nature* perfection this side of glorification” (emphasis in the original).²⁰⁹

Whidden further views Ellen White as using the investigative judgment as a means of stressing the importance of both justification and sanctification. She showed a close relationship between sanctification and the cleansing of the sanctuary as a means of motivating believers into holy living.²¹⁰ In that regard he sees three factors essential for character transformation. First, urgency; since the judgment is coming to a close, it is even more important for character development to take place. Second, God’s law is His “revealed will and the standard of judgment.” Third, availability of power; because Jesus, the believers’ High Priest, is available to provide them with the necessary power for their perfection.²¹¹

Furthermore, he notes that even though she affirms the reality of salvation, from God’s perspective, of those living after the close of probation, they are not aware of their sealing, and they also live at the time when Christ has ceased His work as mediator for unbelieving sinners. The good news, as Whidden reads Ellen White, is that each living human being would have “irrevocably chosen sides” before the close of probation. Additionally, the redeemed, at this time, will have perfect characters. Nevertheless, this does not mean perfectionism and the eradication of their sinful natures. At the same time,

²⁰⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 133, 134.

²¹⁰Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 354.

²¹¹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 355, 356.

though still possessing sinful natures, the redeemed will not overtly sin during this time.²¹²

He further believes that she saw the perfection of the saints, during the time of trouble, as an “attitude [which] eschews sin, avoids indulging in and cherishing it, and seeks the paths of obedience, doing the best that can possibly be done.”²¹³ Therefore those living at the end of time are perfect, yet imperfect. They are perfect in the sense that they no longer cherish sin, but imperfect in the sense that they still possess “sinful natures and all they do is less than the best.”²¹⁴ In that regard, commenting on *The Great Controversy*, page 425,²¹⁵ he concludes that during the time of trouble the redeemed will be habitually trusting in Jesus. Therefore, they will not commit sins that are in need of a mediator. They will no longer willfully commit sins. Thus, they are perfect but not “absolutely sinlessly perfect.” They reflect the character of Christ, in that they do not commit willful overt sins, and at the same time they are imperfect because there is still the need for the full consummation²¹⁶ of their earthliness.²¹⁷

²¹²Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White, 358-360.

²¹³Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White, 363.

²¹⁴Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White, 362.

²¹⁵See, Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911). 425. “Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14.”

²¹⁶Here Whidden appears to be doing a bit of a theological jig in order to avoid stating that believers living after the close of probation will still commit sins.

Although he recognizes the presence of the “perfectionist interpretation” of her writings as regards the time of trouble, Whidden does not agree with this viewpoint. To him, White’s writings support the view that Christ, through His life and death, has already demonstrated that human beings can render perfect obedience to God’s law. Furthermore, since the investigative judgment culminates before the close of probation, then God has already sealed those who are faithful to Him and as a consequence, there is no need for their faithfulness to be proven during the time of trouble.²¹⁸ Instead of a “perfectionist interpretation” of White’s time of trouble writings he proposes what he calls a “justificationist interpretation.” This line of interpretation sees the redeemed as laying hold on the mercy of God—who has forgiven their past sins—and the source of their trial is not the temptation to commit overt sins, but to doubt that God has actually forgiven them. Thereby, the sealed demonstrate “that they can cling by faith to the mercy and pardon of God.”²¹⁹ Whidden also observes a close relationship between White’s emphasis upon justification by faith and the “inevitability of human failure.”²²⁰ This is of extreme importance since “God’s loving and just acceptance is the only foundation upon which to build an experience of character transformation.”²²¹

Since human failure is inevitable, human perfection is relative. Thus, he understands that Ellen White’s reluctance to portray the saints as perfect, is not due to

²¹⁷Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 365. This point allows for those living at the end to commit sins. As was demonstrated in chapters two and three this point is not agreed upon among all Adventist commentators.

²¹⁸Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White, 368, 369.

²¹⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 368-371.

²²⁰Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 381.

²²¹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 392.

modesty but due to an understanding which sees human perfection as relative. Therefore, even laying claim to perfection, *ipso facto*, is a danger to the relative nature of such a reality.²²² Since sanctification is a dynamic and not static experience and since it is a lifetime work, it is not instantaneous—and perfection results from sanctification—accordingly, perfection is active and not passive. Accordingly, though believers are to strive toward perfection, no one is to claim it.²²³ Nevertheless, perfection does not mean reaching a stage whereby one is beyond temptation—only at glorification will that become a reality.²²⁴ At the same time, the truly sanctified believer will not cherish, excuse, or indulge in sin and sinful habits.²²⁵ And although there is no excuse for any sin, Whidden recognizes a difference between willful sin and sin because of deception or surprise.²²⁶ He views a distinction between “weakness” and “attitude” as regards committing acts of sin. To him, White also saw that distinction and as such the person who sins as a result of weakness is not the same as the one who has a wrong attitude towards God.²²⁷

With regard to White’s postulations on the humanity of Christ, Whidden recognizes a balanced tension (my term) within her writings on perfection. Whereas he sees her writing on sins as a result of weakness, there is no space to excuse sin. He sees

²²²Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 124.

²²³Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 338, 339.

²²⁴Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 343.

²²⁵Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 344, 345.

²²⁶Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 346, 347.

²²⁷Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 126, 127.

her as constantly maintaining the theme that what God required of Adam before the fall, He still requires of His children today. The gospel by no means weakens the claims of His law. This requirement is not limited to the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness—it places special emphasis upon that which the Holy Spirit does through the life of the Christian.²²⁸ For White, one of Satan's great lies is the claim that sinners cannot give perfect obedience to God's law. Christ's life, in fallen human nature, was lived in perfect obedience to God's law and thus He is an "emphatic example and a living demonstration to the universe that obedience for fallen humanity is possible. Thus, even though believers have cultivated and inherited tendencies to sin, it is possible, through God's grace, to overcome them. Therefore, no one has any excuse for transgressing God's law."²²⁹ In that regard the perfecting believer has a humble attitude since it is only through the grace and power of God that perfection is possible.

However, do those believers who live through the time of trouble play any role in vindicating God? Whidden does not see Ellen White as teaching the vindication of God by those believers who live through the time of trouble. To him, based upon the tenor of White's statements on the vindication of God, it is safe to conclude that she indicates that this was done by Christ on the cross.²³⁰ To him the main theme in Ellen White's theology was the Great Controversy. Through the Great Controversy theme, he sees her placing an

²²⁸Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 331, 332.

²²⁹Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 335, 336.

²³⁰Whidden, "The Vindication of God and 'The Harvest Principle,'" 44-47.

emphasis upon God working to reconcile sinners back to Himself and at the same time vindicating His name.²³¹

In summation, as regards the human nature of Christ, the fact that Ellen White wrote so extensively over a period of more than 60 years, according to Whidden, but at the same time, maintained consistency, serves to highlight the clarity of her thought on the humanity of Christ. Additionally, the balanced tension between her uniqueness and identity statements helps to accentuate the depth and power of her writings. With that in mind, it is of utmost importance to allow the balanced tension to stand. However, as Whidden sees it, the problem in interpretation stems from two quarters. First, from those who attempt to place an emphasis upon one aspect of Christ's human nature at the expense of another, and second from the attempt to bring a total solution to that which is, by its very nature, a mystery.²³²

However, since in Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ there is a twin emphasis "deep *identity*" and "sinless *uniqueness*" she, in his understanding, could sound like either the author of Hebrews, in stressing the identity between Christ and humanity, or the Apostle John in discussing His uniqueness (emphases in the original). Her focus on identity or uniqueness, according to Whidden, was dependent upon the particular doctrinal issue she had in mind at the time. Thus, when emphasizing the importance of victorious Christian living and the power of Christ to keep the believer, she would focus upon His identity with humanity. But when emphasizing His role as "sinless,

²³¹Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 150, 151.

²³²Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 69, 70.

sacrificial substitute,” she would focus on His uniqueness. Thus, he sees in Ellen White’s writings a balanced view on the humanity of Christ.

Whidden believes in maintaining the balance between Christ’s uniqueness from, and identity with, the rest of humanity.²³³ This balance means that Christ’s human nature is neither strictly prelapsarian nor postlapsarian.²³⁴ So, while Jesus is “sufficiently like us to be our effectual example and to demonstrate once and for all that obedience is possible,”²³⁵ He is also our sinless substitute.²³⁶ While He is our victorious helper, He is also our “sanctifying Intercessor.”²³⁷ Christ must be “sinlessly *unique*” in order for Him to justify humanity; at the same time He must also be “deeply *identified* with our weakness” in order for Him to be able to “help us in our struggles with temptation” (emphases in the original).²³⁸ The balance between Christ’s identity and uniqueness, for Whidden, must be maintained since it possesses profound implications for the atonement.

Christ’s Human Nature and the Atonement

As mentioned above, Whidden understands Ellen White as arguing for the necessity of the uniqueness of Christ in relation to the atonement. This uniqueness is

²³³Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 75.

²³⁴Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 18. For Whidden it is sufficient for Christ to be “enough *like* us in His *identity* with our real true humanity to be a genuinely empathetic, graciously transforming Intercessor and enough *unlike* us in the *uniqueness* of His ‘sinless’ human nature... to be a fully satisfying, effectual, sinless substitute.”

²³⁵Whidden, “The Vindication of God and ‘The Harvest Principle,’” 44-47.

²³⁶Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry* (October 1993), 5-9.

²³⁷Whidden, “Repairers of the Broken Link,” 37.

²³⁸Whidden, “Repairers of the Broken Link,” 150.

highlighted in two ways. First, Christ was unique as the God-man, and second, He was unique in terms of His human nature. In Whidden's understanding, only divinity was qualified enough to make atonement for sin. In order for the sacrifice for sin to meet the necessary satisfaction of God's broken law it must of necessity been a divine sacrifice. In that light he sees five important elements associated with Jesus' full divinity and the atonement.

First, even though divinity did not die on the cross since Christ possessed both divinity and humanity, and since He consented to death—being the God/Man—then His “human death became invested with the infinite value of eternal love.”²³⁹ No other human being can rightfully lay claim to being the God/Man and thus no other human being was capable of dying for humanity's sin.

Second, “only a love that resided in a member of the Godhead was capable of effectually judging sin.”²⁴⁰ This concept incorporates the idea of God's love—which is so great that He grants His creation free choice.

Third, since the result of accepting Christ's sacrifice is eternal life, and since only one who is immortal can grant eternal life, then Christ must of necessity be inherently immortal.

Fourth, only divinity can give justifying grace and sanctifying grace.

²³⁹ Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding Its Implications for Life and Thought* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 249-250.

²⁴⁰ Whidden, et al, *The Trinity*, 250.

And fifth, Christ must be fully divine in order to assure humanity of His constant availability as “redeemer,” “advocate,” “intercessor,” and “mediator.”²⁴¹

Christ’s death was the means whereby divine atonement was made for sin. Therefore, it was necessary for Christ to be fully divine. But since it is not possible for deity to die, the incarnation was necessary since, by becoming human, Jesus was able to experience death.²⁴²

With the full divinity of Christ already established, there comes a naturally arising question. Does Christ’s full divinity in anyway compromise His human nature since no other human being is divine? For Whidden, Jesus’ full divinity in no way compromises His full humanity.²⁴³ But, does His full humanity of necessity mean He had to assume a human nature precisely the same as all other human beings in the incarnation? For Whidden, “Christ cannot be just like us in every respect and be our Savior.”²⁴⁴ Thus, when considering the atonement, Jesus’ sinlessness is just as important as His deity.²⁴⁵ In order for Christ to provide the atoning sacrifice for sin as well as administer the “effects” of His atonement in “His heavenly intercession,” He must of necessity be sinless in both nature and character.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹Whidden, et al, *The Trinity*, 254.

²⁴²Whidden, et al, *The Trinity*, 249. Ellen White agrees “When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible.” Ellen White, Letter 280, 1904, paragraph 9. <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p12881.9643,g14069.10626016&index=1> (accessed July 27, 2022); also excerpted in SDABC 5:1113, par. 3.

²⁴³Whidden, “Why Should Jesus be Both Divine and Human?” *Ministry*, March 2003, 24-26.

²⁴⁴Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 142.

²⁴⁵Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 142.

²⁴⁶Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 141.

With that in mind, Whidden poses what he considers to be some crucial questions as regards the efficacy of the atonement and the “‘postlapsarian’ aspects” of Christ’s nature. He asks, if the term “‘propensities to or of sin’ means a “‘natural’ inclination (proclivity, proneness, natural bent, or predilection...to do the wrong thing),” would that in any way nullify the saving efficacy of Christ’s death? Additionally, does either the Bible or Ellen White present any evidence making a sinful nature essential for Christ’s atoning death to be efficacious? Was a sinful nature as essential for the atonement as His full divinity?²⁴⁷ For Whidden the answer is no, since, from his perspective, Christ, in His atoning role, needed to be sinless in nature as well as in character. And even though it may appear that He had an advantage over the rest of humanity, that advantage is actually a disadvantage in the end.²⁴⁸

Chapter Summary

Whidden’s Christology provides a picture of both Christ’s work and person. Even though it may not be readily apparent to some observers, he closely relates the two but in doing so he tends to have Christ’s work as the starting point of his Christology. This is most evident in his treatment of the atonement. Christ, for Whidden, must be fully divine in order for Him to be the atoning sacrifice for sin. At the same time, his arguments for Christ having a sinless spiritual/moral nature are premised upon the impact that the alternative would have on the atonement. For Whidden, Christ came into the world for

²⁴⁷Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 9.

²⁴⁸Whidden, “Repairers of the Link,” 129.

the purpose of bringing salvation and in order for Him to do so He must be both divine and human—with His human nature being free from the corruption of sin.

Christ stands in contrast to all other humans who are born with a sinful nature, which inevitably leads to acts of sin. In that regard, Whidden has a place for original sin, but not in the Augustinian/Calvinistic sense. Human beings are completely incapable of saving themselves and are thus shackled by their sinful condition. Sinful acts, therefore, are a reflection of a sinful state—and sin itself is not just an act. In that regard, Whidden acknowledges the Bible as presenting a fourfold understanding of sin. Namely, (1) “sin is the transgression of the law”; (2) sin is the kind of attitude which makes excuses for negative feelings; (3) “whatsoever is not of faith is sin”; and (4) sin is the innate bad condition with which all humans have been born. The only solution to sin is salvation.

Whidden highlights humankind’s inherent incapacity to save themselves and acknowledges that salvation must come from the outside. This is where God steps in and justifies the penitent because of what Christ has done on the cross. Resultantly, the justified person, again because of God, develops a negative attitude toward sin and a positive attitude towards God. Because Christ is the God-man and Savior, Christ’s humanity comes into the picture.

Whidden recognizes the animated debate within Adventism on this topic and believes there may not necessarily be an absolute need for complete unanimity on the topic. He believes that Christ did not have to take or assume any of the four definitions of sin in order for Him to be humanity’s Savior from sin. Whidden believes that Christ would have been disqualified from His saving role if He came into this world in a depraved condition. Nevertheless, he posits the view that Christ’s humanity was *affected*

as a result of sin but not *infected* with sin. Thus, in terms of His human nature, Christ could identify with humanity because He was *affected* by sin, but simultaneously, He was unique because He was not *infected* with sin. Christ's human nature, therefore, was neither strictly prelapsarian nor postlapsarian.

Interestingly enough, in doing his Christology, Whidden also makes an overt attempt to find consensus within Adventism as per the human nature of Christ. His paradigm of "uniqueness" and "identity;" "affected" but not "infected" is for the expressed purpose of moving away from the polarizing concepts of prelapsarianism and postlapsarianism. Thus, with this paradigm, he attempts to bridge the Christological chasm within Adventism. At the same time, he is unafraid to address directly what he considers to be the shortfalls of the postlapsarian position.

To him, Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ portray this "affected but not infected" paradigm. He views her writings on the subject as keeping a balanced tension between identity and uniqueness regarding the human nature of Christ. Additionally, he recognizes an element of mystery in the human nature of Christ and that human understanding and inquiry are therefore limited.

However, within Adventism, there is a strong tendency to delve into the mystery of Christ's humanity. This tendency, according to Whidden, is due to an understanding of perfection and Last Generation Theology within Adventism. He understands perfection to be sanctified Christian character development. With regard to Last Generation Theology, he sees the Last Generation as having to endure testing, second only to that which Christ endured, but at the same time they depend upon the merits of Christ and not their own.

Furthermore, he does not see Ellen White as assigning to those who live at the close of earth's history any role in the vindication of God. God vindicates His own name.

At the end, Whidden's Christology places a heavy emphasis upon Jesus—Jesus who died as the atoning sacrifice for sin and is now ministering the merits of His blood on behalf of penitent sinners. He presents a Jesus who has a “*a deep identity*” with humankind, which enables Him to identify with their struggles and proffer aid in temptation. At the same time, this Jesus possesses “*a profound uniqueness,*” in that He is “*sinless in nature and performance*” and thus qualified to be humanity's “*fully satisfactory, sinless substitute*” (emphases in the original).²⁴⁹

Since the respective Christologies of Douglass and Whidden have been examined, the task now is to identify their individual hermeneutics in interpreting the writings of Ellen White on the human nature of Christ.

²⁴⁹Whidden, “Essential Adventism or Historic Adventism?” *Ministry* (October 1993), 5-9.

CHAPTER 5

HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF DOUGLASS AND WHIDDEN

Chapters 3 and 4 described, and to some extent evaluated, the theology of Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden and their use of the writings of Ellen White on the human nature of Christ. Chapter 5 will compare and contrast the specific hermeneutical principles of both expositors. The chapter begins with an examination of Douglass's hermeneutics, and then examines the hermeneutics employed by Whidden. Finally, it presents a comparative evaluation of the hermeneutics of both authors.

Hermeneutics of Herbert Douglass

In his monumental work, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen White*, Herbert Douglass devotes an entire section of nine chapters to providing an understanding of her writings. Seven of these chapters outline hermeneutical principles for interpreting Ellen White's writings.¹ Since they are his stated principles of hermeneutics, it is important to provide some treatment of them. Among the principles listed in *Messenger of the Lord*, I will first outline those most germane to this study, and explain how they are used. Also, in connection with his discussions of the human nature of Christ, there are other basic hermeneutical principles, which I will also explain with examples of how they are used.

¹See, Herbert Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen White* (Nampa: Idaho, 1998), 372-465.

Although Douglass' work presents seven chapters specific to hermeneutical principles, the first three chapters contain the majority of principles that are relevant for his interpretation of Ellen White. He begins with general or basic principles for interpretation and then provides internal and external principles² of interpretation.

The first of his "basic principles" is to know what the author meant at the time of writing, and what it means for today. This step takes into consideration such things as historical context, literary form, knowledge about the author, and the unity of the corpus of the author's writings.³ Second, even though Ellen White's prophetic ministry is accepted, one must not render "blind obedience" to her writings since that poses a potential danger.⁴ Third, a proper attitude towards understanding her writings is necessary. Having a proper attitude means, *inter alia*, one must be willing to obey truth, be open to discovering new truth, be mature enough to lay aside pre-existing opinions, and have the expectation that any new light will be harmonized with previously discovered truth.⁵ Fourth, the Bible has primacy in matters of faith and practice.⁶

The first of his "internal principles" of interpretation is foundational; the other seven are essentially necessitated by the first: "Recognize that the Bible and the writings

²By internal principles Douglass means looking at "what" the author wrote. To get a clearer understanding of a puzzling passage one at times has to examine the key words and phrases in the passage or statement. By external principles he means things external to that which is written but at the same time which would have influence/impacted what is written. See Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 388.

³Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 372, 373.

⁴Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 373.

⁵Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 374.

⁶Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 377, 378.

of Ellen White were the product of thought inspiration, not verbal inspiration.”⁷ To delineate the Adventist understanding of “thought inspiration”⁸ is outside the scope of this dissertation, but it is the basic presupposition underlying Douglass’s hermeneutics.

Second, words change in meaning over time. Third, the expositor must recognize that even inspired writers sometimes utilize hyperbole. Fourth, the reader must understand the precise meaning of the phrase within which a word is used. This is important since it helps to limit the possibility of taking what was written to mean more than what was stated. Fifth, although inspired by God, prophets can at times use imprecise expressions. Sixth, in order to understand a statement that may at first blush appear to be “troublesome,” the reader must consider its immediate context in the paragraph or page. Seventh, words can change in meaning when used in a new historical context. Eighth, since one’s own background and experience colors one’s understanding of words, one must not assume that one’s own understanding of a word is the same as that of the author.⁹

Douglass also presents the following “external principles” of interpretation. First, before drawing conclusions on a particular subject, one must take into consideration all that the author wrote on that subject. Doing so will help to counter the presuppositions of

⁷Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 389; see also 375-381.

⁸Seventh-day Adventists subscribe to “thought inspiration” and not “verbal inspiration.” Thought inspiration implies that God inspired the biblical authors with thoughts, and they, still guided by the Holy Spirit, utilized their own words and expressions to communicate the thoughts. Verbal inspiration suggests that God gave the biblical author the exact words which they were to write. For a precisely nuanced comparison of seven models of inspiration, as understood by Seventh-day Adventists, see “Ellen White and Models of Inspiration,” chapter 6 in Jud Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010), 106-131.

⁹Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 389-391.

the interpreter—which may limit one’s ability to see the author’s intent.¹⁰ Second, interpret statements within their historical context. As circumstances change, meaning tends to change as well.¹¹ Third, get to the heart of the principle underlying the particular statement or passage and from there go to the policy (specific application) that follows from the principle.¹² Fourth, be aware of that, over time, even inspired writers grow in their understanding of truth.¹³ Fifth, be mindful that not everything written by Ellen White may be understood immediately—or even after years of study.¹⁴

Hermeneutical Principles Specifically Relevant to Studying the Human Nature of Christ

Know What the Author Meant and What It Means Today

Since English is the original language of the writings of Ellen White, English-speakers will not need to do foreign language research—as is the case with the Bible. Nonetheless, the expositor has to be cognizant of changes in the meaning and uses of words, because most of her writings were done in the nineteenth century. Relative to the human nature of Christ, there are some key words found within her writings that Douglass sought to interpret. For example, in addressing the issue of passions and propensities, Douglass makes a marked distinction between *natural* passions and

¹⁰Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 394.

¹¹Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 395.

¹²Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 397.

¹³Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 403.

¹⁴Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 405.

propensities as compared to *evil* passions and propensities.¹⁵ In the process he portrays Jesus as possessing the former but not the latter.

Although he argues for Jesus possessing normal passions and propensities, Douglass further contends that Ellen White did not see Jesus as possessing some passions.¹⁶ This is important since he desires to exempt Jesus from human passions and propensities that are easily labeled as sinful. The challenge arising from this line of argument is obvious. If, as he contends, Jesus had natural passions but not evil passions, then how it is that Jesus did not have some normal passions? Is it that some normal human passions are evil and others are not? Is it that Jesus' human nature was tweaked in such a manner that He was naturally bereft from some normal human passions?

Principles of Unity and Non-contradiction

A second aspect of Douglass's hermeneutic is evident in his practice of defending his positions by presenting extensive quotations from her writings.¹⁷ Since he views the entire corpus of her writings as a unitary whole, the principle of *non-contradiction* is an *a priori*. His response to those who utilize the writings of Henry Melvill in defense of the third option in Adventist Christology is a prime example of this. Even though he considers the touted comparison between White and Melvill as a valiant attempt, to him the comparison is not theological since, in his view, Melvill was "burdened with his

¹⁵Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 118.

¹⁶Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 117.

¹⁷Anyone reading Douglass' writings will of necessity meet numerous references to the works of Ellen White. As stated in chapter 2, footnote number 52, above, he sometimes strings together a number of quotations from her writings on a particular topic and provides headings, but no analysis or comments.

Calvinistic presuppositions!”¹⁸ It should be noted that he considers Ellen White to be “this world’s clearest expositor of what the Bible writers meant, and still mean, for Christians today.”¹⁹

It is noteworthy that the *unitive* principle of Ellen White’s writings includes the *non-contradiction* principle. Indeed, to understand precisely what Ellen White meant when she wrote, and means today, it is best if one takes into consideration the entire body of her writings on a particular topic. However, bringing the writings together is one thing while interpreting them is another. Interpretation tends to come along with presuppositions. And, as is demonstrated below, Douglass had his own presuppositions whilst interpreting Ellen White’s writings on the human nature of Christ.

No Blind Obedience

Douglass accepted the authenticity of Ellen White’s prophetic gift and ministry while simultaneously utilizing “careful thinking” in interpreting and applying her writings.²⁰ Put another way, even inspired writings need interpretation. The fact that Douglass utilizes this principle is obvious, and since it is readily seen implied in other principles, there is little need to provide separate treatment to it here.

Attitude of a Learner

It is crucial to approach her writings from the perspective of a learner, and with a willingness to not only acquire knowledge, but to apply it to one’s own life. Douglass

¹⁸Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 58.

¹⁹Douglass, *The End*, 147.

²⁰Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 373.

displays this principle in the way he treats the crucial role of victorious Christian living. To him, victorious Christian living is of such significant standing that he intimately connects it to the Second Coming, the vindication of God,²¹ the Harvest Principle, and Great Controversy theology,²² and he strongly supports it from Ellen White.²³

The Bible Has Primacy in Matters of Doctrine and Practice

Since the primary focus of this dissertation is the use that Douglass and Whidden made of Ellen White's writings, particular focus is made on her writings. Nevertheless, Douglass provides sufficient evidence in support of the principle that the Bible has primacy over the writings of Ellen White. In expounding upon sanctification and the "safe to save" concept, Douglass leans heavily upon Matthew 24 and 25²⁴ as well as Revelation 14 and 19.²⁵ He especially links Matthew 24 and 25 with the Great Controversy theme, effectively seeing glimpses of the vindication of God in those chapters.²⁶ Similarly, with the Harvest Principle he sees biblical support in Revelation

²¹Douglass, *The End*, 122, 123.

²²Herbert Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 27.

²³A favorite citation in support of victorious Christian living is White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 69. Douglass, *The End*, 67.

²⁴Douglass, *The End*, 112, 113.

²⁵Douglass, "Advent Waits for God's Exhibit A," *Review and Herald*, August 13, 1970, 7; and Douglass, *Should We Ever Say "I Am Saved?"*, 106, 107.

²⁶Douglass, *The End*, 112, 113.

14:12²⁷ along with Matthew 24 and 25.²⁸ He pays particular attention to Matthew 24:14 which emphasizes the completion of the gospel commission before the Second Coming.²⁹

The fact that Douglass endeavors to support some of his signature positions upon Scripture is highly admirable. At the same time, he tends to lean a bit more heavily upon the writings of Ellen White than on Scripture in his arguments for the “safe to save” concept and the Harvest Principle. He tends to utilize Scripture as a basic springboard for those doctrinal postulations and then rely more heavily upon Ellen White for support. Ellen White’s writings do have their role to play in bringing understanding to doctrinal teachings. However, her writings are not the basis of doctrine. Their use does not contradict the *sola Scriptura* principle. Therefore, it might have served Douglass better to have a greater weight of evidence from Scripture rather than from White’s writings. His apparent over-reliance upon Ellen White’s writings can contribute towards a critical reader forming the conclusion that he is basing a doctrinal teaching upon the writings of Ellen White and not upon the Bible.³⁰

Internal Principles for Interpreting Ellen White’s Writings

Internal principles of interpretation are concerned with those things *within Ellen White’s writings* which are pertinent to a proper understanding. These principles are necessary since they assist the interpreter with getting a fuller grasp of what was written.

²⁷Douglass, *The Faith of Jesus*, 3.

²⁸Douglass, *The End*, 112, 113.

²⁹Douglass, “Salvation’s Gift is Not Free,” *Review and Herald*, February 20, 1975, 13, 14.

Among the internal principles of interpretation Douglass lists in *Messenger of the Lord*, he uses several of them in his expositions on the humanity of Christ within the writings of Ellen White.

Over Time, Words Change in Meaning

The first internal principle of hermeneutics is that over time, words change in meaning. This principle is especially salient when considering that everything written by Ellen White is over 100 years old. Common language usage is constantly changing. For example, in Noah Webster's 1828 *Dictionary* the word "intercourse" had two definitions:

1. Communication; commerce; connection by reciprocal dealings between persons or nations, either in common affairs and civilities, in trade, or correspondence by letters. We have an intercourse with neighbors and friends in mutual visits and in social concerns; nations and individuals have intercourse with foreign nations or individuals by an interchange of commodities, by purchase and sale, by treaties, contracts, etc. 2. Silent communication or exchange. "This sweet intercourse/Of looks and smiles."³¹

Ellen White's published writings use the word "intercourse" more than 300 times, but never with direct reference to sexual intercourse. Theological language that is rooted in long tradition may change more slowly than common language, but even theology has its trends and fads. Thus, the fact that words change in meaning was an informing principle in Douglass's expositions.

³⁰Therein lies the most significant challenge within Adventism as regards the human nature of Christ. The theological battle is fought primarily upon the basis of Ellen White's writings and not the Bible. This point is elaborated upon in the conclusion of this dissertation.

³¹Noah Webster's 1828 *Dictionary*, online at <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/Intercourse>, accessed October 17, 2022.

Even Inspired Writers Use Hyperbole

Hyperbole, like other literary devices, is found within the Bible. John 21:25 provides an obvious example: If all the things that Jesus did “were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” In relation to the human nature of Christ in the writings of Ellen White, Douglass does not cite any passages where this literary device may have been employed.

With regard to counter-balancing statements, Douglass’ handling of what can be considered a key counter-balancing statement on the human nature of Christ brings to the fore a hermeneutical principle not mentioned in *Messenger of the Lord*.

Clear Passages Define Obscure Ones, not Vice Versa

Douglass’s approach to interpreting the “Baker Letter”³² brings to view another important hermeneutical principle. Use the weight of the many clear passages to define the few obscure ones.³³ He reasons that the usages of the vast body of Ellen White’s writings on the humanity of Christ, should be used to interpret the Baker Letter, rather than using the Baker Letter to interpret what she wrote on the humanity of Christ.³⁴ By utilizing this principle, Douglass effectively makes a basic hermeneutical appeal. In order to accurately interpret what an author has to say, the majority of uses should be used to interpret the minority. It is also highly appropriate to accentuate the clear in order to elucidate the opaque.

³²See, Ellen White, “Lt. 8, 1895,” *Manuscript Releases* (Washington, DC: White Estate, 1993), 13:18-20.

³³Douglass, “Letter to Eric Webster,” 6.

³⁴Douglass, *The End*, 58, 59.

However, although this is a valid principle, in this case Douglass uses it with the assumption that the Baker Letter is an isolated and obscure missive from the pen of Ellen White. Indeed, we do not have sufficient knowledge about the “Baker Letter,” as Douglass rightfully contends,³⁵ to allow the contemporary expositor to know the circumstances under which it was written. Is there sufficient internal evidence in the letter to allow the reader to understand precisely what Ellen White had in mind when she cautioned Baker regarding the way he should portray Christ’s human nature? Is it possible that this particular letter should be considered as a part of the majority corpus of Ellen White’s writings on the human nature of Christ, and not as an isolated piece written under obscure circumstances? Is it proper to treat it as somewhat of an aberration, thereby basically dismissing its place among Ellen White’s writings on the humanity of Christ? These are not just moot questions. They are critical to what Douglass considers a most important aspect of Adventist Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. It may appear that the approach utilized by Douglass in expositing “The Baker Letter” has the potential to create a fissure within the writings of Ellen White on the humanity of Christ. This brings us to a final internal principle that is original with Douglass.

The Ellipse of Truth

As demonstrated in chapter 3 above, under the heading “Justification,” Douglass proposed a principle he called the ellipse of truth. As an insightful and apparently unique contribution to theological hermeneutics, his definition deserves to be quoted at length.

³⁵Douglass, “Letter to Eric Webster,” 6.

Truth in any area of thought, whether in theology, philosophy, law, music, or education, must be understood in the form of an ellipse rather than a circle. An ellipse has two foci; a circle has one.

This means that truth is the sum total of its objective and subjective elements, the two foci in the ellipse.... The point is that neither foci is the totality of truth. The human need for order, on the one hand, and the need for relevance and meaning, on the other, is the basic structure that truth is meant to satisfy....

In theology, truth is the sum total of its objective and subjective elements. One focus is the emphasis on transcendence (revelation) and the other is immanence (human response, such as reason and feeling). To ignore the existence of the two foci in the theological ellipse makes the ellipse of truth into two circles. And the two circles have been arguing their particular point of view since Creation.

But Biblical truth unites the two circles within the ellipse of salvation. Thus, revelation with the authority of God's Word, meets our human need for meaning and relevance....

When someone appeals to the Bible as "truth" without an equal emphasis on personal meaning and relevance, we know that the ellipse has become two circles. On the other hand, when one appeals primarily to reason or feeling as the test of truth (human autonomy), we also know that the ellipse has become two circles.

Salvation truth binds together the objective will of God and the subjective "Yes" of a responsible (response-able) person. *Even as water cannot be divided between hydrogen and oxygen and remain water, so the objective and subjective elements of salvation cannot be divided and yet remain "salvation."*

For example, grace fulfills its task only when men and women of faith respond. Likewise, pardon/forgiveness comes only to those who comply with its conditions such as a sincere desire for power to overcome the evil for which the pardon is sought.

All the divisions between various churches within Christianity, and between Christianity and other world religions, occur when the ellipse is ignored. *When one of the foci becomes the "circle of truth," we surely have a heresy (a partial truth that becomes a whole error).*

For example:

An overemphasis on objective justification leads to human passivity, with faith becoming primarily a matter of mental assent to revelation. This often leads to a careless use of such phrases as "Jesus paid it all." Or "the atonement was completed on the cross," etc.

An overemphasis on subjective sanctification leads to feeling and reason as the test of faith. This often leads a person to minimize the primary authority of God and to make predominant such words as, "It's not truth for me unless I feel it or until it makes sense to me." Or people may place primary weight on visual "evidence" such as faith healing, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), charismatic speakers, hugging, laughing, religious meetings, etc.

An overemphasis on objective justification tends to make imputed righteousness the most important element in salvation.

An overemphasis on subjective sanctification (imparted righteousness) tends to make human performance the basis of salvation.

An overemphasis on Christ on the cross tends to eclipse the essential importance of Christ as our all-powerful Mediator/High Priest and/or to minimize the essential work of the Holy Spirit....

To sum up, to espouse and emphasize only one focal point in the ellipse, is to distort truth. Even though each focal point in the ellipse emphasizes truths worth dying for, arguments will never end until a person accepts the total picture of the truths emphasized in both foci. This understanding of truth is as inescapable as the joining of hydrogen and oxygen to make water.

The writings of Ellen White transcend the arguing circles of Methodists and Presbyterians, for example, (or the arguing circles of Christianity and Hinduism, from another viewpoint), by seeing truth as the embracing *ellipse* rather than a tug of *paradoxes* and eternal *tensions*.³⁶

Douglass offered the term “ellipse” as a more precise alternative to the common theological expressions “paradox” or “tension” to describe competing priorities.

Acknowledging that *both foci* are equally truthful expressions of revealed truth requires the reader to accept both emphases, rather than embracing one emphasis or perspective and dismissing the other. He applied this quite broadly to bifocal terms like law/grace, justification/sanctification, or Christ’s sacrifice on the cross vs. His mediation in heaven.

However, he does not seem to have applied the ellipse principle to the human nature of Christ. Seeing that an ellipse is bifocal and not unifocal, perhaps he could have considered the possibility of Ellen White having twin foci in dealing with the human nature of Christ. Having examined the internal principles of interpretation I now move on to examine his external principles of interpretation.

External Principles for Interpreting Ellen White’s Writings

Among the external principles of interpretation listed by Douglass in *Messenger of the Lord* four of them are utilized by him in his expositions on the humanity of Christ

³⁶Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 260-263, 573-575, Appendix P: “The Ellipse of Salvation Truth,” emphasis supplied. See also, Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, 20, 21.

within the writings of Ellen White. First, before drawing a conclusion on a particular point one must take all that was written on that particular point. Doing so will help to counter presuppositions of the interpreter—which limits one’s ability to see all that is there to be seen.³⁷ Second, interpret statements within their historical context. As circumstances change the meaning of things tend to change as well.³⁸ Third, be aware of the fact that even inspired writers grow in their understanding of truth over time. Through the passage of time even prophets grow to understand some things better.³⁹ Fourth, be mindful that not everything written by Ellen White will be understood immediately—and at times, even after years of study.⁴⁰

The first of these external principles, to consider all that is written on a particular point before drawing a conclusion, deserves further elaboration. Two areas where this principle is most distinctly displayed are Douglass’s emphases on character development and victorious Christian living.

Christian character development holds a pivotal place in Douglass’ writings. Indeed, it holds a prominent place in the writings of Ellen White as well. He considers character development to be the same as sanctification⁴¹ and stresses that it is essential for entrance into heaven.⁴² He further connects character development to the Harvest

³⁷Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 394.

³⁸Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 395.

³⁹Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 403.

⁴⁰Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 405.

⁴¹Douglass, *The End*, 112.

⁴²Douglass, *Should We Ever Say “I am Saved?”* 104, 105.

Principle⁴³—seeing it as a necessary condition before the Second Coming of Christ.⁴⁴ Character development eventually leads to one being safe to save⁴⁵ which, in turn, he closely connects to character perfection.⁴⁶ Added to that, only those who have developed spotless characters will experience the sealing⁴⁷ in the last days. Douglass also envisions key aspects of the Great Controversy⁴⁸ and the vindication of God⁴⁹ in close alliance with character development.

Victorious Christian living and character development, though separated for understanding, are basically intertwined within Douglass' soteriology. It will not be unfair to say that for him victorious Christian living is one of the foremost goals of Christian character development. It is via his expositions on victorious Christian living that one gets a closer look at the necessity for Jesus having a sinful human nature. As a matter of fact, he sees the plan of salvation dependent upon Jesus living victoriously whilst having a sinful human nature.⁵⁰ From his standpoint there is a close relationship between the Christian understanding and appreciating the prominence of Jesus having a sinful human nature and Christian character development.⁵¹ Jesus, then, is the ultimate

⁴³Herbert Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 27.

⁴⁴Douglass, *The End*, 122, 123.

⁴⁵Douglass, *Should We Ever Say "I am Saved?"*, 74, 75.

⁴⁶Herbert Douglass, et al, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, 27.

⁴⁷Douglass, *The End*, 121, 122.

⁴⁸Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 41, 42.

⁴⁹Douglass, *The End*, 135.

⁵⁰Douglass, "Why Jesus is Exalted," *Review and Herald* February 24, 1972, 13, 14.

⁵¹Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 26, 27.

example of victorious Christian living since He, though possessing sinful human nature, overcame temptations of every stripe.⁵²

Christian character development and victorious living are indeed two integral soteriological themes within Christian theology. Douglass' portrayal of these themes is nuanced within a strong Adventist framework. For this reason, he leans heavily upon the writings of Ellen White. His works show his mastery of her writings on the said topics. As he does his expositions one can easily observe the manner wherewith, he intricately connects Adventist eschatological themes with both Christology and soteriology. He affixes the incarnation within a soteriological framework and in the process adduces the absolute necessity of Christ coming in a postlapsarian human nature—Jesus, to him, must necessarily be both Savior and example.

As noted above, Douglass strongly advocated the principle of bringing together all that is written on a topic in order to counter presuppositions of the interpreter. Although he can't be fairly charged with failing to bring together all that was written by Ellen White on the human nature of Christ, there may appear to be a case for him holding on to his presuppositions.⁵³ Two such presuppositions are the church vindicating God and "The Harvest Principle."⁵⁴

⁵²Douglass and Van Dolson, *Jesus—The Benchmark of Humanity*, 32.

⁵³In a subsequent section below, his two major theological guiding principles, the Great Controversy Theme and the foundational role of eschatology, are examined. These serve to shape his interpretative structure as regards the human nature of Christ.

⁵⁴The Harvest Principle is examined in a subsequent section, thus there is no need for it to be examined here.

As regards the vindication of God, whereas Douglass asserts that Jesus, through His victorious life, suffering and death vindicated God, he still insists that the church—namely the Seventh-day Adventist Church—has a critical role to play in vindicating God.⁵⁵ The role of the church is so vital in the vindication of God that it, according to Douglass, not only provides additional answers to Satan’s questions regarding God’s fairness, but presents “indisputable evidence” as regards the fairness of the demands God has placed upon His creation.⁵⁶ There are at least three major challenges with this theological presupposition.

First, maybe it was not his intent, but this position has the capacity to diminish that which Jesus has accomplished via His life, death and resurrection. It appears to portray Jesus’ work as being insufficient to bring about God’s vindication. Second, it elevates the work of humanity—namely Seventh-day Adventists. It tends to indicate that God is dependent upon the church for the vindication of His name and character. And although Douglass, maybe in an attempt to mitigate against the over-exaltation of the church, argues for two phases in the vindication of God, a second phase is only necessary because the first was not sufficient. Third, as Paul Evans’s 2010 doctoral dissertation points out, Ellen White supports the idea that *God vindicates Himself* through the church, but not in any way that implies a lack in what Christ Himself has done.⁵⁷ It therefore appears that even though he brought together all Ellen White had to say on the humanity

⁵⁵Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 110, 111.

⁵⁶Douglass, *The End*, 135.

⁵⁷See Paul M. Evans, “A Historical-contextual Analysis of the Final-generation Theology of M. L. Andreasen,” Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2010), 275–290.

of Christ, he still held on to his presuppositions and they in turn were part of his hermeneutical framework.

As stated above, Douglass includes in his work other principles of hermeneutics. But the ones listed here are those most pertinent to this study. With that in mind, I now move on to two other overarching guiding principles in Douglass' understanding of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ.

Two Key Guiding Principles

In a letter written to Eric Claude Webster, Douglass admits to two of his major theological guiding principles. First, the great controversy theme is the focal point of his theology⁵⁸ and second eschatology is his theological starting point.⁵⁹

The Great Controversy Theme

The Great Controversy, according to Douglass, is the organizing principle of Ellen White's teachings on matters such as "health, education, history and science."⁶⁰ In addition, in his last major work before his passing, Douglass accorded the great controversy theme in her writings the designation "the heartbeat of Adventism."⁶¹ Furthermore, in a letter to Eric Claude Webster, he indicated that the Great Controversy

⁵⁸Douglass, "Letter to Eric Claude Webster," 3, 27.

⁵⁹Douglass, *The End*, 27.

⁶⁰Douglass, "Ellen White and Adventist Theology," *College and University Dialogue* (Silver Spring: Review and Herald, 1998), 13-15, 19.

⁶¹See, Douglass, *The Heartbeat of Adventism: The Great Controversy Theme in the Writings of Ellen White* (Nampa: Idaho, Pacific Press, 2010).

theme is the focal point of his writings.⁶² Hence it comes as no surprise that he weaves together integral aspects of the Great Controversy into his Harvest Principle concept.⁶³

Similarly, with regard to the sanctification of believers, the Great Controversy also comes into view. By living holy lives, believers demonstrate that God is a God of freedom and they volitionally choose to follow His way, thereby refuting Satan's lie that God is a tyrant.⁶⁴ As regards the vindication of God, he considers the church as serving to execute its second phase and thereby settle any lingering questions in the Great Controversy.⁶⁵ And furthermore, since the human nature of Christ is intricately intertwined with both Douglass' soteriology and eschatology, and since the believers—especially those of the final generation—demonstrate victorious Christian living, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christology is also connected to the Great Controversy. Therefore, the interconnectedness of three major Christian doctrines—namely Christology, soteriology and eschatology—is clearly evident in Douglass's view of the Great Controversy.

Douglass's emphasis upon the Great Controversy is highly commendable. Indeed, the Great Controversy can be readily seen as the metanarrative of Adventism's theological outlook. Further, Douglass's ability to demonstrate the interconnectedness

⁶²Douglass, "Letter to Eric C. Webster," 3.

⁶³Douglass, *The End*, 113; Douglass, "Jesus Waits for a Quality People," *Review and Herald*, December 6, 1973, 9, 10.

⁶⁴Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 41, 42.

⁶⁵Douglass, *The End*, 136.

among Christology, soteriology, and eschatology within the context of the Great Controversy also serves to accentuate his depth of understanding of Adventist theology. The main challenge with his notions of the Great Controversy, which was highlighted on page 211 above, pertains to the magnitude of the role assigned to the church as regards the vindication of God.

The Foundational Role of Eschatology

In a response to Eric Claude Webster, whose doctoral thesis included a chapter on Douglass's Christology, Douglass asserts that eschatology is his theological starting point. His basic theological question relates to the thus far unfulfilled promise of the Second Advent.⁶⁶ It is through this line of thinking that he constructs the Harvest Principle. The key facet of the Harvest Principle is that God is obligated to wait for a significant number of believers to reach a state of Christian maturity before Christ can return.⁶⁷ This demonstrates the close connection that Douglass makes between the Harvest Principle—which is eschatological by nature—and soteriology.

Further, linking the return of Christ to the emergence of a group of mature Christians, places the onus upon the church of either hastening or delaying the return of Christ.⁶⁸ Douglass assigns to this same group the responsibility of completing the church's mission and envisions a bevy of activity at the tail-end of probationary time that is without precedent within Christian history—with the probable exception of the

⁶⁶Douglass, "Letter to Eric Claude Webster," 27.

⁶⁷Douglass, *The End*, 65.

⁶⁸Douglass, *The End*, 74.

apostolic era.⁶⁹ When this is accomplished Jesus's work as Mediator will cease and there will be a group of believers who are a group of people who are a true reflection of Jesus's character.⁷⁰

Thus, similar to the case with the Great Controversy theme, Douglass once again does some interconnections among soteriology, Christology, eschatology, but this time he also adds the sanctuary doctrine and mission. His interconnections, at face value, appear to flow and present evidence of careful construction. Added to that, by including mission within the overall framework of the Harvest Principle he highlights the *raison d'être* for the church's existence. He thereby makes an appeal to the church's sense of mission—which must necessarily be completed before Christ returns. Effectively then, Douglass' strong appeal for the emergence of a significant group of mature Christians is not just for the purpose of believers being preoccupied with perfection of Christian character. It is an appeal to complete the work of the gospel and usher in the Second Advent.

The major challenge with him having eschatology as his theological starting point is self-evident. Since he goes about seeking an answer to the apparent delay in Christ's return, then it is only natural for him to construct his theological argumentations to answer his basic question. In the process, although his arguments may flow smoothly into each other there is the real possibility of overstating his points and stretching some of his postulations.

One such case of a possible overstating of his point, relative to eschatology, is found in his treatment of Matthew 24. From his point of view the focus of Jesus,

⁶⁹Douglass, "Salvation's Gift is Not Free," *Review and Herald*, February 20, 1975, 209, 210.

regarding the signs of His return, was more on the situation within the church rather than on that within the world.⁷¹ The pericope pertinent to the signs of the Parousia is Matthew 24:4-14.⁷² Within those 11 verses, the weight of evidence appears to be more on the external signs rather than on the internal ones. In this passage, vss. 6, 7, 9, and 12 are clearly specific to the situation within the world. Verses 4, 5 both deal with being aware of the deceptions of false Christs. Verse 8 links verse 7, which deals with general world catastrophes, and vs. 9 which deals with persecution meted out to followers of Christ. Verse 10 informs about individuals who were followers of Christ falling away and vs. 11 is related to vss. 4, 5, in that it warns about the emergence of false prophets. Verse 13 sensitizes Jesus' followers to the importance of tenacity and verse 14 links the Parousia with the church's completed mission.

From what has been demonstrated, four vss.—6, 7, 9, 12—are specific to the situation within the world. Three vss.—4, 5, 11—emphasize the importance of safeguarding against deception—which arises internally and externally. One verse—vs. 8—is a linking verse. One verse—vs. 10—prophesies a falling away from among Christ's

⁷⁰Douglass, *The End*, 136, 137.

⁷¹Douglass, *The End*, 79.

⁷²*New American Standard Bible*, The Lockman Foundation. ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶ You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸ But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹² Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

followers. The remaining two verses address two different things. Verse 13 which calls for tenacity among Christ's followers and verse 14 is concerned with the completion of the gospel commission and the return of Christ. None of these verses seem to provide overt support to the strength of Douglass' argument regarding Jesus's alleged emphasis upon the situation within the church—especially when one considers Douglass' emphasis upon the maturing of the gospel harvest. Apparently, by using eschatology as his starting point Douglass unwittingly claimed more than there is to claim in Matthew 24.

This brings to completion an examination of Douglass' hermeneutical principles. The focus of this work now turns to the hermeneutics of Woodrow Whidden.

Hermeneutics of Woodrow Whidden

Unlike Herbert Douglass, Woodrow Whidden does not have any publications, to date, in which he articulates the hermeneutical principles he employs relative to Ellen White's writings. That being said, it is possible to recognize the hermeneutics he utilizes as he expounds on Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. Based upon my reading of Whidden, I have observed five main operative principles.

First, Whidden's major works on Ellen White's writings consider her works in chronological order of their publication. Although chronology itself may not be a hermeneutical principle, it can cast light on the principle of progressive revelation. Second, he approached his study in a systematic manner and in the process examined the totality of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. This is somewhat analogous to the *tota scriptura* principle, and to Douglass's principle of reading all she wrote on a topic before concluding. Third, he used her writings to interpret themselves—similar to the analogy of scripture principle. Fourth, at times he employs some facets of

exegesis. And fifth, as someone who subscribes to the Wesleyan quadrilateral, he at times employs reason to interpret Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. From this premise, I now move on to providing evidence of his employment of the five stated principles.

Chronological Approach

Whidden's 1989 doctoral thesis is titled "The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent Path to Perfection, 1836-1902." In this work he undertook a chronological examination of Ellen White's soteriology. Similarly, his major work examining Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ: A Chronological Study*, is also chronological in nature, as evidenced in the subtitle. By so doing he was able to observe progression of thought and change in emphases over time.

As regards justification by faith, for example, he sees a dearth of statements in her writings on the issue of justification by faith before the 1880s. He does admit, though, that this does not mean she was not a believer in justification by faith before that time. An easy example of her belief and teachings on justification by faith in the pre-1888 era is at the 1883 General Conference Session where several of her sermons emphasized justification by faith.⁷³ In the same manner, he contends that Ellen White did not place central emphasis upon Christ's humanity during the 1888 General Conference Session or in the immediate period thereafter. In that regard, he clearly observed a progression in her

⁷³Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 27.

emphasis upon justification by faith and the human nature of Christ—which to him were not coupled together.⁷⁴

Demonstrating chronological and statistical support for his views regarding Ellen White and the humanity of Christ in relation to righteousness by faith, he catalogued her uses of the term “fallen nature” in relation to Christ. During the period 1858 to 1888 he noted 11 occasions upon which she used the term, or about once every two years. During the period 1889 to 1902 she, however, used the term a bit more frequently—19 times.⁷⁵ That roughly translates to 1.5 uses per year. This may support his contention of low correlation between her concepts of justification by faith and the human nature of Christ.

Whidden, as was demonstrated in chapter 4, pioneered the “uniqueness/identity” couplet in relation to Ellen White’s points of emphases on the human nature of Christ. He found that during the 1896 to 1902 period she tended to emphasize His uniqueness from the rest of the human family more than His identity with the rest of the human family.⁷⁶ Interestingly enough, during this period there tended to be an emphasis upon Christ having a postlapsarian human nature in the works and words of individuals such as A. T. Jones and E. Waggoner.⁷⁷ Therefore, it appears that Ellen White did not share the same

⁷⁴Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature’?”, 8.

⁷⁵Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 163.

⁷⁶Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 51, 52.

⁷⁷Alonzo T. Jones’s Christology was covered in chapter one. For more information see, *1893 General Conference Bulletin* (1893), 412; *1895 General Conference Bulletin* (1895), 232. Ellet J. Waggoner’s Christology was covered in chapter one. For more information, see, *1893 General Conference Bulletin* (1893), 412; *1895 General Conference Bulletin* (1895), 232.

focus on the humanity of Christ as did Waggoner and Jones in the years immediately subsequent to the 1888 General Conference Session.

Whidden's chronological approach to Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ is indeed commendable. Through this approach he demonstrated her points of emphases over time. He even highlighted a significant difference between her and her Adventist contemporaries, in the 1890s, on the nature of Christ. Her emphasis was upon the *uniqueness* of Christ's nature, whereas theirs was upon *identity*.⁷⁸

Thus, Whidden's use of a chronological approach seems to contribute towards an understanding of Ellen White's statements on the human nature of Christ. However, was he simply chronological and not systematic?

Systematic Treatment

Systematic treatment⁷⁹ of a biblical topic, or almost any topic for that matter, is important in order to provide the opportunity for the most thorough coverage of the said topic—and maybe the fairest coverage as well. In his expositions on Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ, Whidden, for the most part, takes a systematic approach. His handling of Ellen White's conceptualization of sin is one of the places where his systematic treatment is very evident.

⁷⁸Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 51, 52.

⁷⁹The term “systematic” has a general sense of systematic research and presentation, but Whidden's reasoning about doctrine also uses the academic methods of systematic theology. His “uniqueness/identity” couplet and his view that Christ was “affected” but not “infected” by sin, are examples of his systematic theological thinking. They could also be seen as examples that validate Douglass's elliptical principle.

Based upon his research, Whidden concludes that Ellen White did not limit sin to actions. He sees her understanding of sin as deeper than just actions.⁸⁰ With that in mind he opines that for her sin has two dimensions. Whereas sin can indeed involve actions—transgressions of God’s law—sin also involves an innate human condition. This innate condition is associated with things such as natural inclinations and tendencies that are at odds with God.⁸¹ From Whidden’s perspective, this second understanding is closely aligned to the *root* of sin whereas the first is associated with the *fruit*. Humans need salvation from sin because of the root aspect of sin.⁸² Accordingly, he sees Ellen White as acceding to the doctrine of total depravity—but not within an Augustinian or Calvinistic perspective.⁸³

It is for this reason that Whidden does not see Ellen White portraying Jesus as having precisely the same human nature as the rest of humanity since the fall. Should that be the case then Jesus, too, would necessarily have been in need of salvation.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, he maintains that there was an impact from sin upon Jesus. It is with this impact in mind that he concluded that Jesus was *affected* by sin but not *infected* with it.⁸⁵

⁸⁰Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 22.

⁸¹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White, 128.

⁸²Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 19-21.

⁸³Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 128, 129.

⁸⁴Whidden, “Repairers of the Link: The Humanity of Christ Debate—An Introduction”, 52, 53.

⁸⁵Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 30.

Whidden's interpretation of Ellen White's concept of sin is important to his conclusions on the human nature of Christ—and also has deep soteriological dimensions attached to it. It is by no means an overstatement to say his hamartiology is inextricably connected to his Christology and soteriology. For that reason, his expositions of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ display a strong commitment to avoid implicating Christ in sin in any way. This is important since it impacts upon Jesus' qualification to be humanity's Saviour. As long as one holds to the view that only a sinless one can save sinners then Jesus must necessarily be free from any taint of sin.

The challenge to Whidden's hermeneutic on Ellen White's view of sin lies in his basic assumption—that Christ's human nature had to be inherently different from the rest of the human family in order for Him to qualify as humanity's Saviour from sin. His human nature had to be absolutely free, both internally and externally, from the defilement of sin. However, as demonstrated in chapter one, Adventist commentators such as Alonzo T. Jones, Ellet J. Waggoner and M. L. Andreasen have not shared that assumption. Effectively speaking, at the root of the Adventist debate on the human nature of Christ lies one's definition of sin. An act-based definition of sin has little qualms with seeing Jesus as having a human nature that is the same as the rest of Adam's progeny. A broader definition, which encompasses both acts and nature, refuses to see Jesus as having a human nature that is the same as the rest of humanity.

It was through this broader definition that Whidden was able to conclude that Jesus was affected by sin but not infected with it. This is an interesting paradigm since it straddles the theological fence between prelapsarianism and postlapsarianism. It keeps Christ unsullied by sin—both in nature and action—and thus somewhat different from us,

while simultaneously somewhat like us, and somewhat different from Adam before the fall. From Whidden’s perspective, this paradigm is the key, to interpreting properly Ellen White’s writings on the humanity of Christ. It also provides guiding context to his other signature paradigm—uniqueness and identity—and has the potential to allow for a more nuanced understanding of what Ellen White wrote on the humanity of Christ.

Notwithstanding this, Whidden’s expositions on Ellen White’s view of sin present at least two problematic blips on the theological radar. First, in handling the issue of original sin he cites her solitary use of that term in her published writings.⁸⁶ The following is the paragraph cited by Whidden:

To a large degree Satan has succeeded in the execution of his plans. Through the medium of influence, taking advantage of the action of mind on mind, he prevailed on Adam to sin. Thus, at its very source human nature was corrupted. And ever since then sin has continued its hateful work, reaching from mind to mind. Every sin committed awakens the echoes of the original sin.⁸⁷

Although Ellen White does use the words “original sin,” the context of her statement may not necessarily be a reference to the theological concept of “original sin.” In the article she says: “Every sin committed awakens echoes of *the* original sin.” (Emphasis mine.) The inclusion of the definite article seems to be a strong suggestion that what she has in mind is the particular sin of Adam and not the condition of the human being as a result of Adam’s sin. Even though the two sentences prior to the one in which she mentions the

⁸⁶Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation*, 128, 129. There is also a reference to original sin in Ms 97, 1901. “In the condition of the world today we see the terrible result of living for self. When man ceases to exert a heavenly influence, he still exerts an influence, but it is an influence for evil. If his influence is not hallowed by the sanctifying power of the truth, he is a worker of evil. His selfishness is an injury to him and to others. Every seed of evil which is sown reproduces the evil of the original sin, increasing the curse brought upon the world by disobedience.” 16LtMs, Ms 97, 1901.

⁸⁷Ellen White, “The Warfare between Good and Evil,” *Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901, 241.

words “original sin” deal with the corruption of human nature, the passage may not necessarily have the theological concept of “original sin” in mind.

Second, as he addresses the related issue of depravity, he avers that Ellen White took umbrage to the transmission of guilt via original sin, but not with the transfer of depravity. In the process he argues away her statement in *Child Guidance*, page 475,⁸⁸ regarding the transfer of guilt. For him, Ellen White was being practical and not theoretical. He saw her as placing a heavier emphasis upon human choices rather than upon any inheritance from Adam.⁸⁹ Although there is the possibility that his argument is correct, since he cites her in *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 306,⁹⁰ and *In Heavenly Places* page 146,⁹¹ it can, at times, also be somewhat disconcerting when someone argues away what, from all appearances, is a straightforward statement.

Similar to his handling of Ellen White’s outlook on sin is his approach to her teachings on sanctification. By his own admission, he views her writings on character

⁸⁸See, Ellen White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald, 1954), 475. “Parents have a more serious charge than they imagine. 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.”

⁸⁹Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 130, 131.

⁹⁰See, Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1890), 306. “Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.” It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example, the sons become partakers of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin.”

⁹¹See, Ellen White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 146. “As a result of Adam’s disobedience every human being is a transgressor of the law, sold under sin. Unless he repents and is converted, he is under bondage to the law, serving Satan, falling into the deceptions of the enemy, and bearing witness against the precepts of Jehovah.”

development, as related to Christ's intercessory work and the time of trouble as "some of the most problematic passages in her writings on the subject of perfection."⁹² Why? Because she connects the Second Coming of Christ with Christian character development.⁹³ Recognizing this leads him to conclude that it is possible for Christians to either delay or hasten the Second Coming of Christ—by either not developing or developing characters that are heaven-worthy.⁹⁴

While contending for the importance of character development in relation to the Second Coming, he seems to somewhat contradict himself by making a case for the time of the Second Coming being placed within the Father's own purview.⁹⁵ But Whidden does not follow the same logic as Herbert Douglass, for example, as regards the extent of the role played by believers relative to the Second Coming of Christ. His hermeneutic opts for a heavier focus upon justification—relying upon what Christ has done for the believer, rather than upon sanctification—relying upon what Christ is doing in the believer.⁹⁶ For that reason he appears to be comfortable with seemingly contrasting ideas.⁹⁷ Therefore, he presses two ideals. First, God has placed the Second Coming

⁹²Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 357.

⁹³Here, at least to a certain extent, Whidden seems to agree with Douglass. See chapter 6 for a more complete treatment of this point.

⁹⁴Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 149.

⁹⁵Whidden, "The Vindication of God and 'The Harvest Principle,'" 44-47.

⁹⁶Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance*, 147.

⁹⁷Here again is a parallel to Douglass's elliptical principle, where *contrasting* does not necessarily mean *contradictory*.

within His own purview. Second, believers have a limited role to play in either delaying or hastening this event.

Notwithstanding his admittance of difficulty relative to understanding Ellen White's contributions on Christian character development—especially within the context of the time of trouble, Whidden's hermeneutic has what can be seen as a vulnerability. The Achilles heel within it is one of reconciliation. How can he reconcile two contrasting ideas? If it is that the time of the Second Coming is within God's purview, then how can believers either delay or hasten it depending upon their character worthiness? Apparently, from his systematic premise, he sees God as having set the time for the Second Coming within His own purview. Then, considering Ellen White's statements portraying the possibility of delay or hastening the Second Coming, he seems to soften those statements by focusing upon the importance of depending upon Christ's finished work of justification instead of the ongoing work of sanctification.

By utilizing a systematic approach to interpreting Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ, Whidden was able to generate some keen insights into her thought on that subject. At the same time, he did at times have his challenges. However, he did not limit his hermeneutic to two principles alone. He also used her writings as their own interpreter.

An Author's Writings Their Own Interpreter

One of the ways whereby one can observe consistency in an author, is through using an author's own works to interpret themselves. With that method, internal harmony should be quite observable. Whidden utilized this hermeneutical principle in interpreting the writings of Ellen White as pertains to the human nature of Christ. In no place is this

principle clearer than in his dealing with her statements on Christ's human nature and human nature in general. A key passage highlighting this principle is *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 344.⁹⁸

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable.

For Whidden this passage portrays a clear distinction between Christ's human nature and that of the rest of humanity. The same holds true for White's statement in *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872, where she contends that "man could not atone for man" because "his sinful, fallen condition would constitute him an imperfect offering," and thus of insufficient value to God. From Whidden's perspective, any interpretation of White's statements on Christ's sinful or fallen nature should take this statement into consideration.⁹⁹

In Ellen White's Manuscript 57, 1890, Whidden sees further support for the contrast between Christ and the rest of humanity. To him, there is great importance to the distinction between "fallen" and "corrupted." Jesus' human nature was fallen but not

⁹⁸Whidden, "Repairers of the Link," 122. It is not an overstatement to say that this passage, which originally appeared in Manuscript 50, 1900, is a key to his understanding of exactly what Ellen White meant when she spoke of Christ's sinful human nature. It is as key as is *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 69, is to those who opt for Last Generation Theology and the Harvest Principle.

⁹⁹Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 166, 167.

corrupted. However, the rest of humanity have a nature which is both fallen and corrupted.¹⁰⁰ The idea of contrast, from his perspective, is again seen in her article “God’s Willingness to Save,” *Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884.¹⁰¹ There she portrays human beings as being sinful by nature, whereas Christ was free from any taint of sin.¹⁰²

In the “Baker Letter,” Whidden recognizes what can be understood as the most striking contrasts between Christ and the rest of humanity. Whidden notes that in comparing Adam and Christ, White uses quite similar phrases to describe Adam before the fall and to describe Christ. The expressions “without a taint of sin upon him,” (speaking of the pre-fall Adam), and “no taint of...corruption” (speaking of Christ) are synonymous. On the contrary, her statement in reference to human nature speaks of corrupt human nature which is in contrast to both pre-fall Adam and Christ.¹⁰³

Whidden’s employment of the principle that an author’s writings should be their own interpreter, is one of his strongest lines of argumentation. By using this principle, he is able to use statements made by Ellen White in reference to Christ’s human nature and contrast them with statements in reference to ordinary human nature. His basic assumption is rather straightforward: if Christ, in the writings of Ellen White, is seen to

¹⁰⁰Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 42.

¹⁰¹See, Ellen White, “God’s Willingness to Save,” *Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884, 338. “Just before his cruel death, Jesus said, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain a victory. He had kept his Father’s commandments; and there was no sin in him that Satan could triumph over, no weakness or defect that he could use to his advantage. But we are sinful by nature, and we have a work to do to cleanse the soul-temple of every defilement.”

¹⁰²Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 178, 179.

¹⁰³Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 215, 216.

have precisely the same human nature as the rest of humanity, then whatever is true of human nature is also true of Christ's human nature.

Nevertheless, although this line of argumentation is rather robust, it does not necessarily mean that his notions are beyond challenge. In commenting on Ellen White's article "God's Willingness to Save," *Review and Herald*, May 27, 1884, his line of argumentation is slanted towards seeing her as speaking of Jesus' nature and not His performance. However, the context of the statement seems to more readily lend itself towards performance and not nature. Her words: "Satan could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain a victory. He had kept his Father's commandments; and there was no sin in him that Satan could triumph over" do not seem to imply nature. Apparently, Whidden placed a bit more emphasis upon the words "no weakness or defect that he could use to his advantage." That clause can indeed indicate nature. However, within the overall context of the pericope, it may be best seen as a reference to what Christ did—kept the Father's commandments—rather than who He was. Apart from that challenge, the principle that an author's writings should be their own interpreter, is one of the strongest lines of argument utilized by Whidden. That being said, in order for the best understanding of an author's words to be arrived at, there must, at least at times, be the employment of exegetical principles.

Exegesis

Writing from the perspective of someone who intends to provide honest, extensive and critical analysis of Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ, Whidden makes a somewhat limited use of some elements of exegesis. Thus, in attempting to arrive at the most accurate understanding of terms such as propensities,

tendencies, inclinations, passions, bent, corruption, and depravity, he opted to examine the manner in which she utilized these terms within her writings on the humanity of Christ as well as in other literary settings.¹⁰⁴ Evidently, his reason for doing this examination was to ascertain exactly how she employed those terms in reference to Christ. From his investigation he concluded that she never made a direct statement saying that “Christ took ‘evil,’ ‘corrupt’ and ‘depraved’ ‘propensities,’ ‘tendencies,’ ‘inclinations,’ ‘passions,’ or ‘bents’ to or of sin.”¹⁰⁵

Whidden’s decision to utilize the exegetical principle of word study to the human nature of Christ within Ellen White’s writings is worthy of honorable mention. By doing so he was able to delve into some contextual analysis as regards particular words pertinent to his study. In the process he was able to portray Ellen White as a writer who did not employ phrases which have the potential to move in the direction of a postlapsarian Christology.

Comparative Analysis of the Hermeneutics of Douglass and Whidden

This subsection presents a comparative analysis of both Douglass’s and Whidden’s hermeneutics for interpreting Ellen White’s writings on the human nature of Christ. Although the primary basis for this analysis is the immediately preceding sections of this chapter, it also takes backward glimpses into some items covered in chapters 3 and 4 that are not explicitly stated in chapter 5. This comparative analysis has four major

¹⁰⁴Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 30.

¹⁰⁵Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 31.

categories: basic hermeneutical approach, basic assumptions, target audience, and challenges faced.

Basic Hermeneutical Approaches

From a study of Douglass's interpretation of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ, one can clearly see he wrote in a topical manner. The major topics he covers are as follows; soteriology—especially sanctification, the Great Controversy, and eschatology—evidenced in *The Harvest Principle* and *Last Generation Theology*. He makes such intricate connections among these topics that he sees them flowing into each other and dependent upon each other. As a result, if someone has a challenge with any of the individual topics it is easy to have a challenge with the others as well. Put another way, his arguments for the postlapsarian human nature of Christ impact his views on soteriology, Great Controversy theology, and eschatology.

These intricate connections may be summarized as follows. Jesus had the same sinful human nature as every human being since the fall. Nevertheless, although possessing a postlapsarian human nature Jesus, lived a victorious human life by trusting in the power of God. In the same manner, all human beings have access to the same source of power that He had thus all can be victorious over sin. Eventually, immediately prior to the Second Advent there will be a mature group of Seventh-day Adventist Christians who will live like Jesus did and thus play an integral part in the vindication of God and display to the world the power of the Gospel.

By utilizing this interconnected approach, Douglass can be seen as making a simple claim: what is true of one is true of the other. However, in the process he inadvertently creates a chain-link hermeneutical method in which, if there is one weak

point in the chain then his entire spectrum can be broken. That does not necessarily mean he is wrong in his approach. It simply means his arguments can be negatively impacted by the domino effect.

Whidden, on the other hand, is not as topically focused as is Douglass. He tends to employ a more systematic approach to her writings on the human nature of Christ. Whidden appears to make a concerted effort to allow Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ to interpret themselves. In doing so, he tends to be honest enough to admit that at times her writings are not as easy to interpret as one would like. Unfortunately, however, Whidden on a few occasions tended to soften some of her statements in order that they may fit together with other, seemingly contradictory statements, within his interpretative structure.¹⁰⁶

However, Whidden does get into the technical minutiae of Ellen White's use of words such as corrupt, depraved, propensities, tendencies, inclinations, passions, and bents, as regards the human nature of Christ. By doing so he is able to demonstrate the distinction between Christ's nature and actions as well as throw light on the manner with which she used those terms—namely—she neither directly identified Him as having a

¹⁰⁶Whidden sometimes seems to treat a statement as softer than it really is, in order to remove the contradiction with another statement that Whidden feels is more important. It is as if he sees the statements as a hierarchy, and in case of contradiction, the statement higher on the hierarchy takes precedence and the lower one is regarded as less important. His interpretation of White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 69, may be an example where Whidden, with his more systematic approach, softens a statement in order to harmonize with another statement that he considers more important.

Here is the statement: "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." [Mark 4:29]. *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. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [2 Peter 3:12].* Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain." Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 69. For Douglass, this statement is the foundation for his view of the vindication of God

corrupt or depraved nature nor ever being involved in corrupt or depraved actions. He further noted her utilization of morally qualified and morally non-qualified uses of the word passion in reference to Christ. This distinction served to show that Ellen White, at least from Whidden's perspective, was careful in her language regarding the human nature of Christ. Therefore, the interpreter of her writings on the human nature of Christ should exercise due diligence to avoid interpreting her as saying what she did not say. In contrast, Douglass's approach to interpreting Ellen White on the human nature of Christ, does not provide such detailed studies of word usage and definition.

Whidden also employs a chronological approach to Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. This method provides insights into the developments, within her writings over time. Douglass does not use this method. He tends to place greater emphasis upon bringing together her writings on the human nature of Christ into a composite whole. These differences seem to be a result of them having different basic assumptions.

Basic Assumptions

As identified above, Douglass utilized eschatology as his theological starting point. He asks the question: Why has Jesus not yet returned to earth? He concludes that Jesus has not yet returned because the church is not ready for His return. This basic assumption informs his theological legacy—the Harvest Principle. As stated above, Douglass' theological postulations on the human nature of Christ within Ellen White's writings are heavily interconnected. Added to that, there is the possibility that a reader might surmise that Douglass formulated his Harvest Principle having already assumed

and Harvest Principle. For Whidden, the phrases “perfectly reproduced” and “hasten the coming” are

the necessity of Christ having a postlapsarian human nature as an a priori. One of Douglass's principles is the non-contradictory principle—that Ellen White did not contradict herself. This assumption, combined with her statements that seem to imply postlapsarianism, led him to be a staunch proponent of the postlapsarian human nature of Christ. Interestingly enough, one characteristic of Douglass's writings is the paucity of time devoted to addressing the seeming contradictions within Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ. His preference seems to be in placing a focus upon those statements that are more readily interpreted in a postlapsarian manner.

Whidden, for his part, also assumes that Ellen White does not contradict herself on the human nature of Christ. However, the methodology he utilizes to prove this assumption is quite dissimilar to that of Douglass. Whidden opts to investigate the nuances in her use of the key words, terms and phrases relative to the human nature of Christ. By employing this investigative method, he is able to observe different points of emphasis used by Ellen White relative to the human nature of Christ. This is the basis for his positing the dual principles of *identity and uniqueness* as well as *affected but not infected*. These methods are critical to Whidden's understanding of the human nature of Christ, since they are employed to establish reconciliation within seemingly contradictory statements in Ellen White's corpus of writings on the human nature of Christ.

I argued above that Douglass based the Harvest Principle on his a priori belief that Ellen White's writings are not self-contradictory, and on his belief that some of those statements clearly support postlapsarianism. Whidden shares the belief in non-contradiction, but not the belief in postlapsarianism. Nevertheless, they both assume that it is important for the reader of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ to

softened by giving them relatively less emphasis.

know and understand exactly what she said and meant. However, even though they both set out to demonstrate exactly what Ellen White said and meant when she wrote on the human nature of Christ, they do not always arrive at the same conclusions.

Target Audiences

The basic target audience of both Douglass and Whidden is the Seventh-day Adventist Church community. However, as was demonstrated in chapter 2 above, the Seventh-day Adventist Church community has a somewhat variegated interpretation of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ.¹⁰⁷ Thus, although the basic target audience is the same community, at times, there may be efforts to enlighten members of the community who share different interpretations on the human nature of Christ. At the same time, there are also different target audiences within Seventh-day Adventism. Two of the major target audiences, at least from the perspective of this work, are the scholarly community and the popular community.

Douglass' primary target audience was the popular Adventist community. The vast majority of the books he wrote on the human nature of Christ, along with its concomitants—soteriology and eschatology—were written with the average lay person in mind. Added to that, during his time as an associate editor of the *Review and Herald* he wrote many articles arguing for the postlapsarian position.¹⁰⁸ Douglass himself admitted to the fact that he wrote for the common person. Writing to Eric Claude Webster, in

¹⁰⁷Possible reasons for this variegation are discussed in the conclusion.

¹⁰⁸From reading these articles it is clear that it is through this medium he developed his major arguments for the postlapsarian position on the nature of Christ. Some of his later works were actually expansion upon those articles.

response to Webster's chapter outlining Douglass's Christology, Douglass said that he wrote for the common person. Thus his writings, to that date, 1983, had not presented a systematic presentation on the human nature of Christ.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, since his major target audience was the common person, and since he never did a systematic presentation on the human nature of Christ, then, it is possible that his readers never got his thorough treatment of the said topic.

Whidden's writings on the human nature of Christ contain material for both the common person and the scholarly reader. His doctoral thesis "The Soteriology of Ellen White: The Persistent Path to Perfection, 1836-1902" was done for a scholarly audience. That work provides the basis for two other works, namely: *Ellen White on Salvation: A Chronological Study*, and *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ: A Chronological Study*. These latter two works were done with both the scholarly and the common reader in mind. His joint work with Remwil Tornalejo, "Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response from an Arminian/Adventist Perspective,"¹¹⁰ also had the scholarly community in mind. At the same time, he also wrote articles in both the *Review and Herald* and *Ministry Magazine* that were designed for the common reader. By writing for both the scholarly and common person Whidden has been able to provide systematic treatment on Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ.

¹⁰⁹Douglass, "Letter to Eric Claude Webster," 2.

¹¹⁰Woodrow Whidden and Remwil Tornalejo. "Edward Irving on the Sinful Human Nature of Christ: A Preliminary Response from an Arminian/Adventist Perspective," Unpublished Paper, Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research.

Thus, as we have seen, Douglass and Whidden had at times the same target audience and at other times a different target audience. The main dividing line between them is the fact that Douglass had basically only one target audience in mind—the common person—whereas Whidden had both the common person and the scholarly community in mind. Seeing, then, that they both had similar and different target audiences in mind, did they also face both similar and different challenges?

Challenges Faced

By virtue of the fact that there are different interpretations of Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ, one can assume the probability of difficulties in interpretation. Added to that, if there are difficulties in interpretation, as well as seeming contradictions, how does the interpreter navigate the difficulties and reconcile the seeming contradictions?

As noted above, as regards the seeming contradictions Douglass and Whidden utilized distinct approaches. To add to what was already stated, Douglass' approach appears to be that of an interpreter who believes the weight of evidence on one side of an argument is sufficient to tip the balance in its favor. That manner of reasoning is most forcefully displayed in his treatment of The Baker Letter. Admittedly, he does seem to have a valid point when he says that The Baker Letter should be interpreted by the weight of numerous statements Ellen White made on the human nature of Christ and not the other way around.¹¹¹

¹¹¹Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 57.

Nonetheless, there are at least two weakness with that line of argument. First, when one examines the entire corpus of an author's work there are, at times, certain passages that serve as interpretative keys. Thus, The Baker Letter can be legitimately viewed as an interpretative key. Second, The Baker Letter is not the only statement in the corpus of Ellen White's literary production on the human nature of Christ that can be seen as not supporting the postlapsarian position. The Baker Letter, seems, to this author, to function somewhat as a bridge between the postlapsarian and prelapsarian positions on the humanity of Christ. Douglass, for his part, did not agree with that assertion. Thus he rejected the so-called "third option" on the humanity of Christ debate within Adventism.¹¹²

As regards difficulties in interpreting the writings of Ellen White on Christ's humanity, Douglass does not appear to identify difficulties. This may be due to the basic assumptions with which he worked—Ellen White's writings portrays Christ as having a postlapsarian human nature. He does, however, recognize nuances within her writings. But that is not the same as recognizing difficulties.

However, although he did not necessarily identify it as such, Douglass major difficulty in interpreting Ellen White on the humanity of Christ is his lack of systematic treatment. Although he was highly versed in his command of Ellen White's writings, in general, and on the human nature of Christ, in particular, he never got around to providing a systematic treatment of that topic. At the risk of going into speculation, one is

¹¹²Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 58.

left to ponder if he would have made any adjustments, major or minor, in his postulations on the humanity of Christ had he systematized Ellen White's writings on it.

Whidden faced some similar and also dissimilar challenges. Whidden identified three challenges concomitant with interpreting Ellen White's missives on Christ's humanity. First the overall volume of her writings; second, her lack of providing systematic treatment on the subject in any of her published works; third, the complex statements which provide a certain level of tension between "*uniqueness*" and "*identity*" as per the humanity of Christ in her writings.¹¹³

Although Whidden formulated both the "identity and uniqueness" model, and the "affected but not infected" model, there are some cases where the "identity and uniqueness" model seems to be somewhat insufficient to explain exactly what Ellen White meant on the human nature of Christ. For example, in Manuscript 166, December 15, 1898 (later published in *Review and Herald*, July 17, 1900) she says: "Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature."¹¹⁴ Whidden considers that statement to be in reference to the nature Christ took while He was on earth. However, later in the same manuscript she again utilized the phrase "offending nature of man" but this time it is done in reference to the human nature which was taken by Christ. Whidden concludes that this reference was an anomaly since it was only used once in respect of Christ's human nature. At the end he concludes that the phrase is somewhat difficult but it is easier to see what it did not mean than exactly what it meant.

¹¹³Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 13, 14.

¹¹⁴Whidden, "The Soteriology of Ellen White," 225.

In like manner, Whidden declines providing extensive coverage to the phrase found in Manuscript 1, 1892, (later published in *Selected Messages*, 3:136-141): Christ “passed over the ground where Adam fell, and endured the temptation in the wilderness, which was a hundredfold stronger than was or ever will be brought to bear upon the human race.” When she made that statement, she was speaking about Satan’s charge that it was not possible for postlapsarian humanity to obey God’s law.¹¹⁵ The challenge with that statement is that it is somewhat problematic to fit it, without running the risk of divorcing it from its context, into the identity and uniqueness paradigm.

The most challenging passage, one which Whidden acknowledges as being the strongest alleged postlapsarian statement made by Ellen White, is found in *Desire of Ages*, 117.¹¹⁶ Here Ellen White lays out the respective conditions of Adam and Christ when they were confronted by Satan’s temptations. Whidden admits to the difficulty in interpreting this passage. However, he does not appear to address directly the issue at hand, namely, Ellen White’s contrast between pre-fall Adam and Christ. This contrast is clearly visible, and Whidden recognizes it. However, his response, pointing to the affected but not infected concept, does not appear to address the contrast.¹¹⁷ Ellen White

¹¹⁵Whidden, “The Soteriology of Ellen White,” 192, 193.

¹¹⁶See, Ellen White, *Desire of Ages* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1898), 117. “Satan had pointed to Adam’s sin as proof that God’s law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam’s failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation.”

¹¹⁷Whidden, “What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ’s ‘Sinful, Fallen Nature?’” 49-51.

spoke of Christ entering the wilderness to face Satan at a time when humanity, for four thousand years, “had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth....” Furthermore, she says that “Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.” Whidden, though appealing to a strong sense of identity between Christ and humanity, as well as using the affected but not infected concept, does not appear to address this last part of Ellen White’s statement.

Chapter Summary

The respective hermeneutics employed by Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden in interpreting Ellen White’s writings on the human nature of Christ have their strong points as well as areas where they are not as strong. There are some points of convergence in both of their hermeneutics. However, the points of distinction appear to be greater than the points of convergence. They both faced challenges with their respective interpretations of the human nature of Christ within the writings of Ellen White. Interestingly enough, Douglass does not overtly admit to facing challenges whereas Whidden does. In the end they provide fundamentally differing interpretations on the actual meaning of what Ellen White had in mind when she wrote on the human nature of Christ.

From an evaluative perspective it appears that the hermeneutical principles utilized by Douglass tended to face more challenges than those employed by Whidden.

Notwithstanding that, Whidden also has his robust challenges. Thus, at the end both authors appear to end up with a hermeneutic that is somewhat short of the absolute ideal.

Nevertheless, Whidden’s hermeneutic seems to be a bit closer to the ideal than does Douglass. This may be due to the fact that Whidden was more open to identifying and

embracing the twin foci in Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ than was
Douglass—who was the one who articulated the elliptical principle.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸In *Why Jesus Waits*, Douglass starts with the question, Why the delay? and answers with the Harvest Principle. He seems blindsided to the elliptical principle, which would give equal weight to God knowing the time and humans hastening or delaying the Second Coming. So he takes the answer from *Christ's Object Lessons*, 69 and looks no further—thus violating his own elliptical principle.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents an overall summary and conclusions of this study and suggests areas for additional research. The summary is what can be considered a flowing summary and for that reason does not contain sub-sections.

Summary

The debate surrounding the human nature of Christ within Adventism, as we have seen, is relatively old. The first signs of differences of understanding (on the precise human nature adopted by Jesus during the incarnation) took place in the mid-1890s. However, this debate only took on a more factional nature after the 1950s—especially in the post-*Questions on Doctrine* era. In the period between the 1890s, when the postlapsarian nature became an integral facet of the soteriology of both A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, and the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* in 1957, the postlapsarian nature of Jesus during the incarnation went basically unchallenged. It was during this period that M. L. Andreasen came into prominence within Adventism.

Andreasen took the postlapsarian view, incorporating it with the sanctuary doctrine—which had previously been done by A. T. Jones in his work, *The Sanctified Way to Christian Perfection*. To this combination, Andreasen added his own dimension, namely Last Generation Theology. With Last Generation Theology he envisioned the Seventh-day Adventist Church as having a crucial role to play in the vindication of God. This teaching has a special appeal to Adventism's unique self-understanding, which, in turn, contributed in no small manner towards it receiving popular support within

Adventism. Furthermore, Last Generation Theology created a rather strong interconnection among core Adventist theological positions such as the sanctuary doctrine, soteriology—especially as relates to sanctification and Christian perfection, Great Controversy theology, eschatology and mission. Nonetheless, this position soon received an exceptionally strong challenge with the publication of the book *Questions on Doctrine*.

The authors of the book *Questions on Doctrine* accepted a more complete definition of sin as not only behavioral, but also ontological. They discarded the historically senior postlapsarian view of Christ's humanity and adopted a prelapsarian position. This led to a sharp response from Andreasen and others who supported the postlapsarian position. Although the prelapsarianism posited by the authors of *Questions on Doctrine* did not initially appear to have much weight of support in the writings of Ellen White, the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* inadvertently contributed to a renewed interest in exactly what White had written on the human nature of Christ. One of the more noteworthy Adventist scholars who investigated the topic was Edward Heppenstall.

Heppenstall, through his study of Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ, concluded that her writings took neither a strictly prelapsarian nor a strictly postlapsarian position. For him, White's writings presented Christ as having a human nature that was in some facets akin to Adam before the fall. This position which was relatively new in the Adventist Christological debate, was most effectively stated in his work *The Man Who Is God*. In addition to his published writings, Heppenstall also impacted generations of Adventists scholars through his teaching at the Seventh-day

Adventist Theological Seminary. One of the more notable of Heppenstall's students, who also rejected Andreasen's teachings on the humanity of Christ was Desmond Ford.

Desmond Ford, a native of Australia, and his wife Gillian Ford, cast their lot on the side of the prelapsarian human nature of Christ. The prelapsarian nature tended to be a better fit in Ford's soteriology. Ford's soteriology tended to place a heavier emphasis on justification than on sanctification. Thus, he appeared to place greater soteriological weight behind what Jesus has done *for* the believer, justification, rather than what Jesus is doing *in* the believer, sanctification. This soteriological shift did not have any space for teachings such as Andreasen's Last Generation Theology. Ford eventually had a deep theological split with the Seventh-day Adventist Church over the issue of the sanctuary doctrine. As a result, the prelapsarian position lost one of its most noted champions, although others continued to teach varieties of prelapsarianism. At the same time, Ford's prelapsarian theology received strong opposition from two duos—his fellow Australians Colin Standish and Russell Standish and American missionaries Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short.

Colin Standish and Russell Standish advocated the postlapsarian human nature of Christ. To them God incarnate in fallen sinful nature is salvation's ultimate mystery. They contend that Jesus' statement in John 5:30 is His self-testimony of His incarnation in sinful flesh—He could of Himself do nothing since he was incarnate in sinful flesh. Although in sinful flesh, they held that Christ was never carnal. Although they portray Christ as having a fallen genetic nature—like the rest of Adam's posterity—He did not have a fallen higher nature. Even though Christ possessed a fallen lower nature He never once gave in to sin. Through placing His trust and dependence upon His Father He was

able to overcome temptations both from without and within. Believers, by placing the same trust in the Father as Christ did, have free access to the same power and can live victorious lives.

Although not always in agreement with Colin Standish and Russell Standish on both soteriological and Christological concerns, Robert Wieland and Donald K. Short threw their full weight of support behind the postlapsarian position. They argued that Jesus had to be incarnate in sinful human nature so that He could die as humanity's substitute. They held that had He come into the world with a prelapsarian human nature, it would not have been possible for Him to die. Wieland and Short also contended that Christ, although having a *sinful* human nature, did not have a *sinning* human nature. They would argue that only after one has participated in sin, does one have a *sinning* human nature. They also posited that at birth Christ came into the world as *agape*, in union with His Father. In that sense He was different from other human beings at birth. However, as a result of the new birth, believers, by exercising the same faith as He had, have the same access to the Father.

Although the Wieland/Short and Standish/Standish duos held similar Christologies, the debate was far from over. The prelapsarian position became less influential, but did not disappear, and there remain many adherents to the postlapsarian and mediating positions. Others switched camps from postlapsarianism to the mediating position.

One of the persons who switched sides was Arthur Leroy Moore. Considering himself a crusader for reconciliation among the various Christological factions within Adventism, Moore's Christology attempts to bring about a balance among the various

Adventist Christological strains. From his interpretative perspective he views Ellen White as presenting a duality as regards the human nature of Christ. By employing the lower and higher nature paradigm, he concludes that in Ellen White's view, Christ had a higher nature which was sinless and a lower nature which was sinful. Effectively speaking, Moore believed that Christ had two human natures. For him, the key to resolving the debate on Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ lies in what he terms "the paradox of truth." This concept adduces the belief that at time there are truths that on the surface there may appear to be contradictory, but are actually both true and must be held in tension or balance for the full truth to be understood. In that regard, he concludes that for Ellen White Christ had a *heredity* like the rest of humanity but *not a nature* like the rest of humanity.

Moore's Christology is distinct from all the others examined in this work and his attempt to broker a Christological reconciliation within Adventism has yet to meet with success. Since his main focus was reconciliation, he does not go about attacking any of the Christological factions within Adventism. The same is not as true of Herbert Douglass and Woodrow Whidden.

Herbert Douglass opted for a postlapsarian Christology. His Christological framework, which is heavily interconnected with other key aspects of his theology, such as soteriology, eschatology, the Great Controversy theme, and to a lesser extent mission, necessitates a postlapsarian human nature for Christ. His Christology sees Christ as having the same natural passions, propensities, and weaknesses common to every human being. However, those passions, propensities, and weaknesses would only become evil if they led to the commission of sin. Thus, by His own deliberate choice, Jesus never had an

evil passion, propensity, or weakness because He always chose to live in complete dependence upon, and obedience to, the Father.

Douglass utilized the lower and higher nature concept to elucidate upon Christ and passions. He linked Christ's higher nature to impulses such as the will and choice whereas the lower nature encompasses normal human impulses which seek selfish ends. Douglass reasoned that Jesus' higher nature was able to keep His lower nature in check. He argued that, by depending upon the Father in the same manner as Jesus did, Christians can live the same victorious life over the clamoring of the lower nature. In his scheme of things, especially in an eschatological context, victorious Christian living is not just a possibility, but a necessity.

Douglass' theological brainchild, the "Harvest Principle," relies heavily upon perfection of Christian character. His argument is that the reason for the delay in the Second Coming stems from an unripe harvest. Only when a substantial portion of Seventh-day Adventist Christians have perfected Christian character—the ripening of the harvest—will Christ be able to return. Similar to Andreasen, he contends for the last generation of Christians having a key role to play in the vindication of God. The Harvest Principle, then, helps to settle unanswered questions in the Great Controversy. This principle sits at the core of Douglass' theological superstructure and assigns an exceptionally critical role to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the closing scenes of earth's history. Within his Christology, then, it is essential for Christ to have been incarnate in a postlapsarian human nature, because the most critical aspects of Douglass's overall theology depend upon it.

Woodrow Whidden, on the other hand, abjures postlapsarianism in relation to Christ's incarnation. Whidden sees human beings as being born in an alienated state from God. They are incapable of emancipating themselves from this alienated state and are naturally self-centered. Since human beings are in such a state, no work they perform can be meritorious to God. Therefore, they have to depend upon the righteousness of someone else—Christ—in order to receive justification. This understanding of human nature naturally lends itself to seeing Christ as somewhat similar to the rest of humanity while simultaneously somewhat different.

In that regard, Whidden identifies with the third Christological option within Adventism concerning the human nature of Christ. He sees Ellen White as presenting Christ as being *affected* by sin but not *infected* with it. Regarding her writings on Christ's humanity, Whidden recognizes twin foci. On the one hand, when Ellen White intends to show the closeness of Christ to humanity, her writings emphasize His close identity with humanity. On the other hand, when she wants to portray Him as humanity's Savior from sin, she emphasizes His uniqueness. These twin foci, from Whidden's perspective, help to solve the seeming ambiguities within her writings on the human nature of Christ. Whidden's twin foci highlight the pivotal role of hermeneutics in interpreting Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ.

The hermeneutics employed by Douglass in interpreting Ellen White on the human nature of Christ tend to place more weight on those areas in her writings that seem to point in a postlapsarian direction. He placed less emphasis on those areas which do not seem to support the postlapsarian position. Furthermore, he employs some robust hermeneutical principles such as the principle of non-contradiction, recognizing the

unitive nature of Ellen White's writings, and allowing the writings to interpret themselves. However, at the same time, he tends to overstate some of his conclusions. The greatest weakness in his hermeneutics lies in his never providing a systematic study of all her writings on the human nature of Christ.

Unlike Douglass, Whidden provided a systematic treatment of Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity. Similar to Douglass, he also employed the non-contradiction principle. However, he takes a different path as regards that principle. Whereas Douglass tended to place the bulk of his focus upon those areas with a postlapsarian hue, Whidden sought to reconcile the areas of seeming contradiction within Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ. He also employed hermeneutical principles such as using her writings to interpret themselves, facets of exegesis, and plain reason. Whidden's hermeneutic, like Douglass's, does have its challenges. His biggest challenge lies in the fact that not all Ellen White's statements on the humanity of Christ find a snug fit in his uniqueness and identity paradigm.

Conclusions

This section adduces the conclusions drawn from chapters 2 through 5. The conclusion points are given in the following manner. First the conclusion points are listed, with internal examples, on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Second, general conclusion points are listed with internal examples.

Conclusions on the Early Development of the Debate

The emphases in the 1890s, identified with Jones and Waggoner, are not always consistent with those of Ellen White. This is best illustrated by Jones's statement at the

1895 General Conference Session, that there was not one “particle of difference”¹¹⁹ between Christ’s nature and ours—which was immediately challenged on the basis of Ellen White statements on the human nature of Christ. The fact that Jones was challenged by some of the delegates at the session indicates that they had at least a slightly different understanding of the humanity of Christ within Ellen White’s writings than he did. This point illustrates that Jones and Waggoner’s Christology was not accepted wholesale, even at this early stage. However, their postlapsarian Christology held basically unchallenged sway within Adventism for around 60 years.

However, the postlapsarian Christology is not without its internal challenges. One such challenge stems from the fact that there is the tendency to violate the principle of non-contradiction. For example, Colin Standish and Russell Standish, both postlapsarian stalwarts, argue that Christ had an unfallen *moral* nature.¹²⁰ At the same time, they, in responding to the idea of Christ having a fallen physical nature but an unfallen *spiritual* nature, conclude that such cannot be the case.¹²¹ Although someone may argue that unfallen *moral* nature and an unfallen *spiritual* nature are not necessarily one and the same thing, they connect the moral nature with the higher nature—with which the spiritual nature is a core component.¹²²

¹¹⁹1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, 312.

¹²⁰Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The 2007 Questions on Doctrine Conference*, vol. 3 (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2007), 217.

¹²¹Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The Theology of Questions on Doctrine: Fidelity or Compromise* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2007), 57, 58.

¹²²Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The 2007 Questions on Doctrine Conference*, vol. 3, 217.

Another apparent violation of the non-contradiction principle is found in Andreasen's Last Generation Theology. For Andreasen, Jesus, by His victorious life over sin refuted Satan's claim that God's law cannot be kept and thus defeated Satan. However, he then contends that although Jesus defeated Satan, Satan might not be ultimately defeated if he could be victorious over human beings.¹²³ Thus one is left to ask that if Satan was defeated by Jesus, how is it that Satan may not yet be defeated? Similarly, in addressing the issue of the vindication of God, Andreasen claims that God needed one man to prove that His law can be obeyed. Jesus, by providing perfect obedience to God's law, was that one man. However, he then goes on to argue that the Last Generation has the responsibility of vindicating God.¹²⁴ This line of argument appears to contradict itself. It also tends to lessen the weight of what Christ has done and elevate the weight of what is to be done by the Last Generation.

Last Generation Theology also appears to be somewhat inconsistent with Protestant theology. Although one may argue that the weight of what is done by the Last Generation is significantly less than that which was accomplished by Christ, the fact that it *adds* to that which Christ has done seems to be somewhat closer to medieval Christianity than Protestant theology. Any act adding to that which was accomplished is, *ipso facto*, meritorious and thus runs contra to the all-sufficiency of Christ's complete salvific gift.

¹²³Milian L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 309, 310.

¹²⁴Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 316.

Nonetheless, Last Generation Theology has a strong appeal to Adventist self-identity. Adventism sees itself as the remnant church of Bible prophecy. In that regard, it believes it has a God-given mission to share the truth of the Gospel with the whole world. Thus, Adventism's self-concept naturally lends itself in the direction of exclusivity. Last Generation Theology, with its focus upon the believers who endure the closing scenes of earth's history, finds a very snug fit into this facet of Adventist theology.

An interesting aspect of postlapsarian Christology is its tendency to make at least subtle exceptions for Jesus. Even though it confidently claims that Jesus was incarnate in the very same sinful human nature as the rest of Adam's progeny, it does recognize that there are some challenges. The major challenge lies in having Jesus so closely identified with sinners that He is disqualified from being Savior. With that in mind, Robert Wieland, for example, asserts that Jesus, unlike all other babies, was born sinless. From birth He was pure *agape* and never even had a toddler temper tantrum.¹²⁵ From any angle, this clearly indicates a significant difference between Jesus during His infancy and other infants.

Wieland further asserts that Christ, unlike all other children, was not born separated from God. Whereas other children are, or can be kept via the faith and prayers of their mothers, Christ always had faith. For that reason, He never possessed an evil propensity.¹²⁶ In a similar vein Wieland adduces the point that Christ, although

¹²⁵Robert Wieland, *How Could Jesus Be Sinless as a Baby if He Took Our Fallen, Sinful Nature?* (Berrien Springs, MI: Glad Tidings, 1997), 1.

¹²⁶Robert Wieland, *The Broken Link: Some Questions on the Nature of Christ Concerning Apparent Contradictions in Scripture and in the Writings of Ellen White* (Harrisville, NH: MMI Press, 1981), 26.

possessing the same genetic heredity as the rest of humanity, was born minus any taint of sin. That was possible because of Christ's character.¹²⁷

Another striking feature of postlapsarian Christology is a tendency to postulate somewhat troubling theology. Wieland's arguments regarding Christ's birth without a taint of sin because of His character, is a clear case of somewhat troubling theology. How was it possible for Christ to be born with a perfect character? Is it that He had a pre-formed character? Is it that Christ formed perfect character prenatally? Similarly, he avers that in Luke 1:35 when the angel referred to the baby to be born of Mary as "that holy thing," he was speaking of Jesus' performance and not His equipment.¹²⁸ Effectively speaking, then, he argues for Jesus' performance even before He was born—the angel called Him "that holy thing" because, even before birth He had perfect human performance.

Colin Standish and Russell Standish present a similar argument. For them, Christ never had a fallen higher nature because of His perfect character.¹²⁹ This line of argumentation goes against their insistence of Jesus having precisely the same nature as the rest of humanity. It also attributes to Him perfect prenatal character formation. Now, no other human being has ever been born with perfect prenatal character formation. Thus, at the very least, Jesus was born in a vastly different condition, and position, than the rest of humanity.

¹²⁷Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 15, 16.

¹²⁸Wieland, *The Broken Link*, 6.

¹²⁹Colin Standish and Russell Standish, *The 2007 Questions on Doctrine Conference*, vol. 3 (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2007), 253.

The issue of perfect character formation, coupled with postlapsarian Christology, has a robust impact upon soteriology. For that reason, postlapsarian Christology tends to place greater emphasis upon Jesus' example rather than His provision of salvation. Andreasen, for example, argues that while on earth Christ gave a demonstration of what humanity can do. Therefore, just as He was able to triumph over every temptation sent by Satan, so too can every Christian believer.¹³⁰ This same line of argument is trumpeted by Donald Short. For him, Christ was able to travel the entire path of human depravity and come out victorious. This was not an easy path. It was also a risky path. Nevertheless, Christ won the victory. In like manner, through the Holy Spirit's indwelling, believers have access to the same power for victory.¹³¹

This emphasis upon Jesus' example rather than His Saviorhood has a natural concomitant—namely, a heavier emphasis upon sanctification than upon justification. Indeed, since justification focuses upon what Christ has done for the sinner—pardoning iniquity and imputing His righteousness to the penitent—and sanctification focuses upon what He is doing within the believer—bringing about daily transformation, then Jesus as an example in transformed and victorious living is a natural focus.

The prelapsarian position adopted by the authors of the book *Questions on Doctrine* helped to spark the strong factional debate on the topic of Jesus' human nature. This debate helped to send the focus of Adventist theologians back to the full corpus of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ, and an immediate result was the

¹³⁰Milian L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 54.

¹³¹Donald K. Short, *Made Like ... His Brethren to Make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People* (Paris, OH: Glad Tidings, 1991), 101.

third option, or mediating position. In that light, then, *Questions on Doctrine* unwittingly facilitated a renewed, and I daresay more comprehensive, study in the writings of Ellen White on the humanity of Christ. However, the prelapsarian position does not appear to have currently a significant level of traction within Adventism. On that note the focus now switches to the conclusions from chapters 3 and 4.

Conclusions on Douglass and Whidden

Douglass's theology possesses a heavy interconnection of Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. Within his heavily interconnected theology, eschatology has pride of place. By his own admission eschatology is his theological starting point. However, the postlapsarian humanity of Christ is so central to his theology that it can be seen as his theological organizing principle. Postlapsarianism is evident in his soteriology, in his eschatology, and in his missiology—which includes the Harvest Principle. In essence, postlapsarianism can be seen as the common denominator in his core theological postulations. For that reason, a challenge to his postlapsarian position is a challenge to the core of his theological positions. And that may be one of the reasons why he so ardently defended postlapsarianism.

Just as in the case of some of his postlapsarian predecessors and contemporaries, Douglass' strong appeal to the unique place and mission of Adventism can contribute to his position receiving popular support—especially among the laity. Furthermore, Douglass' primary target audience is the lay Adventist member. As identified above, Adventism's self-concept is exceptionally important. Although it may not necessarily appear that way to the casual or unversed reader, postlapsarian Christology, with its historic seniority within Adventism, has had a strong place in Adventism and by

extension can be seen, at least by its defenders, as an essential Adventist doctrine. Therefore, it is not impossible for Adventists, both laity and clergy, to view postlapsarianism in almost the same light as any other core Adventist doctrine.

Douglass presents a strong appeal for victorious Christian living—especially within the context of the final generation.¹³² This strong appeal for victorious Christian living is intricately attached to his postlapsarian Christology.¹³³ This combination appears to be a key contributor towards his insistence upon postlapsarian Christology. His emphasis upon victorious Christian living is highly commendable and noteworthy. Nevertheless, this emphasis tends to go too far—especially as regards the vindication of God and the Harvest Principle.

One of the curiously interesting aspects of Douglass' interpretation of Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity, is Douglass's apparent underestimation of the complexity of the nuances within her writings on the humanity of Christ. He, in expounding upon justification, recognized an important principle he calls the ellipse of truth.¹³⁴ However, he may never have recognized that this same principle could be at work within Ellen White's writings on Christ's human nature. Had he applied this principle to the study of the human nature of Christ, he might have noticed the twin foci of his elliptical principle within White's writings on Christ's humanity.

Two significant weaknesses in his writings on the human nature of Christ are (1) his lack of systematic treatment of the topic, and (2) his tendency to avoid confronting

¹³²Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, 41, 42.

¹³³Douglass, "Why Jesus is Exalted," *Review and Herald* February 24, 1972, 13, 14.

¹³⁴Douglass, *The Jesus Difference*, (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, 2008), 20, 21.

those passages in Ellen White's writings that do not seem to support the postlapsarian position. The first weakness may have been due to the fact that major aspects of his writings were first done as editorials in the *Review and Herald*¹³⁵ with the average lay Adventist member in mind. The second weakness appears to be related to the preceding paragraph. For some reason, he apparently missed the level of complexity within the corpus of Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ. The result of this apparent oversight was a somewhat narrower understanding of her writings than she may have intended.

Woodrow Whidden, for his part, once held to postlapsarian Christology. That fact may have helped to illuminate his ideas—especially in relation to noticing the nuances within Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ. Admittedly, he recognizes this topic as the “most difficult and challenging theme” within her writings.¹³⁶ Added to that, unlike Douglass, Whidden took the time to conduct a systematic study of Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ.¹³⁷ From doing a systematic study on the topic Whidden was able to examine its various sides. The result of this study is a somewhat more balanced understanding of what Ellen White wrote on the human nature of Christ.

¹³⁵Douglass' expositions on the human nature of Christ, as well as the Harvest Principle and soteriology are first found in the *Review and Herald* (now called *Adventist Review*) during the 1970s when he was an associate editor of that magazine (see Bibliography). His later books on the topic do not introduce much more than what was covered in his articles. For the most part they provide amplifications and further supporting arguments.

¹³⁶Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ*, 11.

¹³⁷Arthur Leroy Moore, similar to Whidden, also admits to once subscribing to postlapsarian Christology. As a matter of fact, one can readily observe transformation within his interpretations relative to the humanity of Christ in Ellen White's writings. Similar to Whidden, he also conducted systematic study of the said topic. Neither Moore nor Whidden identifies their systematic study as being the factor responsible for their switching from postlapsarian Christology to the mediating position. Nonetheless, the

One of the more informative discoveries of his systematic study was the uniqueness and identity paradigm.

Whidden's uniqueness and identity paradigm appears to be one of the more adequate means of treating with the subject of the humanity of Christ within Ellen White's writings. This paradigm highlights the balanced tension that Ellen White maintained relative to the human nature of Christ in her writings. However, as strong as Whidden's paradigm is, there are times when it does not appear to be sufficient. One salient example of this apparent insufficiency is his treatment of *Desire of Ages*, page 117.¹³⁸ Whidden admits to the difficulty in interpreting this passage. However, he does not appear to address directly the issue at hand, namely, Ellen White's contrast between pre-fall Adam and Christ. This contrast is clearly visible, and Whidden recognizes it. However, his response, pointing to the affected but not infected concept, does not appear to address the contrast. White spoke of Christ entering the wilderness to face Satan at a time when humanity, for four thousand years, "had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth...." Furthermore, she says that "Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity." Whidden, though appealing to a strong

similarity of them both being former postlapsarian partisans as well as both undertaking a systematic study of Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity is striking.

¹³⁸"In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation. 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. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured." Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, 117.

sense of identity between Christ and humanity, as well as using the affected but not infected concept, does not appear to address this last part of Ellen White's statement.¹³⁹

General Conclusions

There are indeed some strong statements within the corpus of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ that can easily be interpreted as being postlapsarian. Those who hold to the postlapsarian Christological viewpoint tend to have such statements as their "exhibit A" in defending their position. Here are a few of them. In *Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1902 she said: "Clad in the vestments of humanity, the Son of God came down to the level of those He wished to save. In Him was no guile or sinfulness; He was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon Him our sinful nature. Clothing His divinity with humanity, that He might associate with fallen humanity, He sought to regain for man that which by disobedience Adam had lost, for himself and for the world." For the postlapsarian Christologist, Ellen White, by saying that "the Son of God came down to the level of those He wished to save," was advocating postlapsarian Christology.

In a similar vein, *Medical Ministry* page 181 contains a somewhat weighty postlapsarian statement. Here she wrote that Christ "took upon his sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor [*sic*] those that are tempted." By virtue of the fact that she spoke about Christ taking humanity's sinful nature upon His own sinless nature the postlapsarian readily sees a contrast between the two natures.

¹³⁹ Whidden, "What Have We Thought and How Then Shall We Think about Christ's 'Sinful, Fallen Nature?'" 49-51.

The strongest statement on the postlapsarian side of the equation originally appeared in *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874 in an article titled “The Temptation of Christ.”¹⁴⁰ In this article Ellen White made a strong contrast between Adam before the fall and Christ in His incarnation. She saw Adam as being in a stronger position in Eden than Christ was in the wilderness. Since the fall humankind had degenerated physically, mentally and morally. Christ took human nature four thousand years removed from its original “purity and uprightness.”

This is the same passage which was referenced by Whidden—he cited it as it later appeared in *Desire of Ages*, 117—when he spoke of it as being the strongest alleged

¹⁴⁰See, Ellen White, “The Temptation of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874, 51. Since this article is so pivotal for the postlapsarian case the most potent portion is posted here.

“Christ was not in as favorable a position in the desolate wilderness to endure the temptations of Satan as was Adam when he was tempted in Eden. The Son of God humbled himself and took man's nature after the race had wandered four thousand years from Eden, and from their original state of purity and uprightness. Sin had been making its terrible marks upon the race for ages; and physical, mental, and moral degeneracy prevailed throughout the human family.

When Adam was assailed by the tempter in Eden he was without the taint of sin. He stood in the strength of his perfection before God. All the organs and faculties of his being were equally developed, and harmoniously balanced.

Christ, in the wilderness of temptation, stood in Adam's place to bear the test he failed to endure. Here Christ overcame in the sinner's behalf, four thousand years after Adam turned his back upon the light of his home. Separated from the presence of God, the human family had been departing every successive generation, farther from the original purity, wisdom, and knowledge which Adam possessed in Eden. Christ bore the sins and infirmities of the race as they existed when he came to the earth to help man. In behalf of the race, with the weaknesses of fallen man upon him, he was to stand the temptations of Satan upon all points wherewith man would be assailed.

Adam was surrounded with everything his heart could wish. Every want was supplied. There was no sin, and no signs of decay in glorious Eden. Angels of God conversed freely and lovingly with the holy pair. The happy songsters caroled forth their free, joyous songs of praise to their Creator. The peaceful beasts in happy innocence played about Adam and Eve, obedient to their word. Adam was in the perfection of manhood, the noblest of the Creator's work. He was in the image of God, but a little lower than the angels.

In what contrast is the second Adam as he entered the gloomy wilderness to cope with Satan single-handed. Since the fall the race had been decreasing in size and physical strength, and sinking lower in the scale of moral worth, up to the period of Christ's advent to the earth. And in order to elevate fallen man, Christ must reach him where he was. He took human nature, and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race. He, who knew no sin, became sin for us. He humiliated himself to the lowest depths of human woe, that he might be qualified to reach man, and bring him up from the degradation in which sin had plunged him.”

postlapsarian statement. In this passage, the section relative to physical, mental and moral degeneration is the most important and critical to understand. Indeed, Christ was subject to human infirmities and weaknesses. Those infirmities and weaknesses are not necessarily seen as being moral in nature. But what about physical and mental degeneration; was Christ physically and mentally degenerated as compared to Adam? Clearly, as has been noticed thus far, Ellen White saw Christ as being subject to the physical degeneracy of the human family. When it comes to the mental side, however, there is still need for clarification.

There are also some statements within the corpus of Ellen White's writings on the human nature of Christ that can be interpreted in a prelapsarian manner. Admittedly, the statements that can be interpreted in a prelapsarian manner are not as forceful as those that can be interpreted in a postlapsarian manner. The following is a sampling of some of them. "Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam's failure."¹⁴¹ The prelapsarian subscriber sees the statement "He began where the first Adam began" as positing prelapsarian Christology. In *Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901 there is another prelapsarian leaning statement. In this statement Ellen White stated: "In the fullness of time He was to be revealed in human form. He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man." The last clause in this statement appears to be arguing for prelapsarian Christology. Similarly, in *The Youth's Instructor*, April 25, 1901

¹⁴¹Ellen White, *The Youth's Instructor*, June 2, 1898.

White opined that: “When Christ bowed His head and died, He bore the pillars of Satan's kingdom with Him to the earth. He vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory. The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature.” The fact that she said that Christ overcame Satan “in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory” can indicate that Christ had the nature of Adam before the fall.

It seems apparent that White made statements supporting both postlapsarian and prelapsarian positions. This seems to indicate that she had a certain balanced tension in her writings on the humanity of Christ—or in terms of Douglass’s elliptical principle, White’s writings contain twin foci that must both be recognized as true. Furthermore, it is highly likely that the mediating position within Adventist Christology was an outgrowth of recognizing this balanced tension. Thus, instead of seeing White as having a rubber nose, mediating Adventist Christology prefers to see her as having a dual emphasis. Whidden’s “identity and uniqueness” paradigm together with his “affected but not infected” paradigm, are meant to highlight this balanced tension and serve as an interpretative tool for understanding White’s writings on the humanity of Christ.

The existence of this balanced tension also helps to highlight two other crucial points. First, interpreting Ellen White’s writings on the human nature of Christ is much more complex than it appears at first glimpse. If one does not do a comprehensive study of what she wrote on the topic it is relatively easy to have only half the picture. Now even though half the picture is still a part of the picture, having only half of it can have the potential to lead to theologically inaccurate conclusions—as well as possibly misinterpreting and/or misrepresenting exactly what she meant.

Second, since her writings on the human nature of Christ are so nuanced, then it is imperative for the expositor of her works on that topic to maintain the balanced tension she utilized. That is so because her writings on Christ's humanity were much more balanced than some may be inclined to think.

With that in mind, the postlapsarian position, with its strong connection between eschatology and soteriology, tends to place a heavier emphasis upon Christian perfection and the peculiar role of Adventism in fulfilling God's mission. This emphasis contributes to the postlapsarian position having a stronger appeal to Adventism's self-identity as well as its tendency toward exclusivity and elitism. That appeal may be a major contributing factor towards the longevity of postlapsarian Christology within Adventism. By the same token, there is a need for the mediating position to place a bit more emphasis upon the importance of victorious living and the unique role of Adventism—especially within the context of Great Controversy theology.

Why, one may ask, should the mediating Christological position place a bit more emphasis upon those factors? Because although the human nature of Christ is in the first instance a Christological issue, within Adventism it is predominantly a soteriological/eschatological issue. This may be primarily due to the impact of Andreasen's Last Generation Theology. However, even if one were to lay Last Generation Theology aside, there is still the need for emphasizing victorious Christian living. Added to that, Adventism naturally sees itself within the context of the Great Controversy and for that reason it may be more than an academic exercise for the mediating position to highlight this core aspect of Adventist belief.

As regards Adventist beliefs, throughout this study we have observed the existence of varieties of interpretations of Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity. Why the variety? The variety exists, to a large extent, because of points of emphases. In that regard, the postlapsarian position tends to place an emphasis upon Christian character perfection—especially within the context of Last Generation Theology. From that perspective, it is necessary for Christ to have precisely the same human nature as the rest of Adam's progeny in order that He may be humanity's Example in victorious living. The prelapsarian and mediating positions tend to place less of an emphasis upon Christian character perfection and they tend to shy away from Last Generation Theology. They prefer to place a greater emphasis upon Christ's saving work. Thus, for them, Christ has to be somewhat different—either fully like Adam before the fall or morally like Adam before the fall but physically like Adam after the fall—in order that He may be humanity's Savior.

Interestingly enough, Whidden and Douglass both agree, to a certain extent, on the importance of Christian character development before the Second Coming of Christ. For Douglass, Christian character development, which may be better categorized as Christian perfection, is an absolute necessity before the Second Coming of Christ. Furthermore, he adduced the idea that the reason for the delayed Parousia is the lack of a substantial number of mature Adventist Christians. Whidden, for his part, saw Christian character development as an important theological concept—which was also stressed by Ellen White. The subtle difference between Douglass and Whidden lies in the fact that Douglass saw it as an absolute necessity, whereas Whidden saw it as a desirable, though not absolutely necessary goal. For Douglass, the lack of Christian character development

delays the Second Advent. For Whidden, on the other hand, the lack of Christian character development *may* delay the Second Advent. Their respective interpretations of *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 69,¹⁴² is the place where this subtle variation is most clearly noticed.

As we broach the issue of interpreting Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ, a fundamental Protestant, and by extension Adventist, principle comes to the fore—*Sola Scriptura*. However, the human nature of Christ debate, within Adventism, raises a particular Adventist challenge—the question of arena. Where should the debate find its center? Is it in the Bible or in the writings of Ellen White? For the most part this theological battle has been fought over the writings of Ellen White and not the Bible. Now, if it is true (as Adventists claim in their Fundamental Beliefs) that the Bible is the basis for doctrine and practice for Adventists, then should not the Bible be the final court of appeal in settling doctrinal matters? Unfortunately, this appears to be an area where Adventism has some room for improvement. There should be a greater focus upon what the Bible teaches on the human nature of Christ. Does that mean that the writings of Ellen White on this theological topic should be ignored? Absolutely not! However, her contributions should not be the basis of a doctrinal teaching. If her contributions are used as the basis of a doctrinal teaching, then Adventism would be having a dual source for doctrine and not a single source—the Bible. In fact, this appears to be the reason the

¹⁴²“When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” [Mark 4:29]. 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. It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [2 Peter 3:12]. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.” Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 69.

denomination has never officially endorsed either the prelapsarian or the postlapsarian position, because there is no consensus on the position of Scripture.

Suggestions for Further Study

Five areas needing further research arise from this study. The first four are closely related and are more Christological in nature. The fifth area is both Christological and soteriological.

First, if Jesus had the same nature as the rest of humanity, then that which is true of human nature, in general, is true of Him, in particular. As has been observed above, even among the most thoroughgoing postlapsarian Christologists, there is some recognition of Jesus' uniqueness. Thus, for Adventists, a comprehensive study of Ellen White's statements on human nature has the potential of answering the main question: "Was Jesus, during the incarnation, exactly the same as the rest of Adam's progeny?" A definitive answer to that question could settle the humanity of Christ debate among Adventists.

Second, to answer the main question above, it is necessary to make a comprehensive study of Ellen White's use of key words such as "propensities," "liabilities," "bents," "inclinations," and "tendencies." These key words have been interpreted in different ways with the apparent intent of lending support to postlapsarianism, prelapsarianism, and/or the mediating position. However, a convincing investigation of the ways in which Ellen White used these words, leading to a fuller appreciation of exactly what she meant by them, could contribute to greater unity in interpreting them.

Third, there is need for further study of the ellipse of truth as a hermeneutical principle for interpreting Ellen White's writings on the humanity of Christ. Douglass has shown the usefulness of the elliptical metaphor for other areas, but does not appear to have applied it consistently to Ellen White's writings on Christ's humanity. To establish a broader consensus on this principle would strengthen the certainty of the answer to the first question above, "Was Jesus, during the incarnation, exactly the same as the rest of Adam's progeny?"

Fourth, there is a need for further study of Ellen White's statements on the role of Scripture as the rule of faith for constructing Christology. If the answer to the main question could be placed on a solid Scriptural foundation, and if Ellen White's statements could be shown to conform to that Scriptural foundation, the debate among Adventists over the human nature of Christ could be decisively ended.

Fifth, there is a close relationship between Christology and soteriology. Within Christology there are two differing emphases. What I term a "high" Christology tends to place greater emphasis on Jesus' divine *uniqueness*, and less on His *identity* with humanity. A "low" Christology tends to place greater emphasis on His close *identity* with humans, and less emphasis on His divine *uniqueness*. The prelapsarian and mediating Christological positions within Adventism both tend toward a "high" Christology, accenting His likeness to God. The postlapsarian position, on the other hand, tends toward a "low" Christology, accenting His likeness to other humans.

Within soteriology there is what I term a "high" soteriology—which tends to emphasize God's acts in saving humanity, and a "low" soteriology—which tends to emphasize the believer's cooperation with God in becoming more like Christ. Could it be

that within Adventism there are two ways of correlating Christology and soteriology?

The prelapsarian and mediating Christological positions, which emphasize Christ's divine uniqueness ("high" Christology), are naturally paired with an emphasis on God's role in salvation ("high" soteriology); while the postlapsarian position, emphasizing Christ's close identity with humanity ("low" Christology), is naturally correlated with a "low" soteriology, which emphasizes the *believer's role* in becoming more like Christ.

If this is true, then the whole question could be parallel to the centuries-old debate between Calvinists and Arminians, over *where to place the accent* between divine operation and human co-operation in the plan of salvation.

APPENDIX A

PUBLICATIONS OF DOUGLASS AND WHIDDEN

ON THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST

ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY

Publications of Herbert E. Douglass
on the Human Nature of Christ
Arranged Chronologically

- Douglass, Herbert E. "Hastening the Advent." Part 1. *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, August 7, 1961, 1, 2.
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- _____. "Hastening the Advent." Part 3. *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, August 21, 1961, 1, 2.
- _____. "Hastening the Advent." Part 4. *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, August 28, 1961, 1, 2.
- _____. "Beyond Excellence." *Review and Herald*, January 29, 1970, 12, 13.
- _____. "The Modern Cry for Relevance." *Review and Herald*, February 19, 1970, 15.
- _____. "Self-Authenticating Truth." *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1970, 12.
- _____. "Separating the Head from the Heart." *Review and Herald*, March 5, 1970, 15, 16.
- _____. "The Search for Relevancy." *Review and Herald*, March 12, 1970, 14, 15.
- _____. "The Collapse of Certainty in Modern Times." *Review and Herald*, March 19, 1970, 15, 16.
- _____. "Faith: The Free Response of a Convinced Man." *Review and Herald*, March 26, 1970, 11, 12.
- _____. "The Rock of Christian Faith." *Review and Herald*, April 2, 1970, 13, 14.
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- _____. "How to Be Deceived by Reason." *Review and Herald*, August 26, 1971, 14, 15.
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- _____. "Jesus Showed Us the Possible." *Review and Herald*, December 30, 1971, 15, 17.
- _____. "The Demonstration That Settles Everything." *Review and Herald*, January 6, 1972, 13, 14.
- _____. "Concepts of Jesus Affect Personality." *Review and Herald*, August 31, 1972, 12.
- _____. "Why the Angels Sang." *Review and Herald*, December 21, 1972, 11.
- _____. "Where Is Your Faith?" *Review and Herald*, January 4, 1973, 10, 11.
- _____. "What Does the Return of Pentecostal Power Mean?" *Review and Herald*, March 15, 1973, 11, 12.
- _____. "Why Gifts Were Given to the Church." *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1973, 11.
- _____. "God Waits for the Fruit of the Spirit." *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1973, 14, 15.
- _____. "The Kind of Person Who Will Finish the Work." *Review and Herald*, August 2, 1973, 13.
- _____. "How Not to Let the Past Warp the Future." *Review and Herald*, August 9, 1973, 10.
- _____. "The Holy Spirit Refreshes as Well as Empowers." *Review and Herald*, August 16, 1973, 12.
- _____. "No Anxiety in the Man of Faith." *Review and Herald*, August 30, 1973, 11.
- _____. "Jesus Waits for a Quality People." *Review and Herald*, December 6, 1973, 9, 10.
- _____. "Emmanuel—God With Us." *Review and Herald*, December 20, 1973, 11, 12.

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- _____. "Christ's Object Lessons: Ellen White's Eschatological Principle." *Review and Herald*, May 23, 1974, 12.
- _____. "A Special Truth and a Special Work." *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1974, 14.
- _____. "Truth Understood Only by Men of Faith." *Review and Herald*, June 20, 1974, 11.
- _____. "God Stakes His Honor on a Victorious People." *Review and Herald*, July 4, 1974, 15, 16.
- _____. "Fitness for Heaven, Now." *Review and Herald*, July 18, 1974, 11.
- _____. "Not Entrapped by Cheap Grace." *Review and Herald*, August 1, 1974, 17, 18.
- _____. "Sanctification Not Imputed." *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1974, 13, 14.
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