

Apostasy

The truth about the human nature of Christ is one of the basic doctrines undergirding the entire plan of redemption. Few facts are more crucial to our salvation.

Yet it is a tragic fact that few of our people recognize this truth for what it is—a cornerstone, not only to the work of Christ to save us from sin, but to the quality of our daily Christian experience.

WHAT IS THIS TRUTH?

This great truth, which is fully supported by the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, explains that Christ came from the highest heaven down to our level in order to save us. Jacob's ladder reached all the way.

"Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw . . . If that ladder had failed by a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome."—*Desire of Ages*, 311-312.

"It took the divine and the human to bring into the world the salvation that was needed by fallen man."—*Review*, November 1, 1892.

Christ had to become a human being like us, in order to save us. If He had only become a man like unfallen Adam,—He could only have saved unfallen Adam. (Yet, ironically, Adam before his fall did not need saving; he was sinless.)

"Christ took our nature in its deteriorated condition."—*Manuscript*, 143, 1897.

It was necessary for Christ to unite the fullness of divinity with the fullness of our fallen nature, in order to reach man and lift him up.

"He took upon Him our nature that He might reach man in his fallen condition."—*Signs*, September 23, 1889.

"He assumed human nature, that He might elevate the human family."—*Review*, February 15, 1898.

In order to successfully redeem us, Christ had to successfully resist the temptations we must meet. He is the Forerunner. He has gone before us, showing us the way. That way is obedience to the law of God, through faith in divine power.

"He took our nature, and in it lived a life of perfect obedience."—*Signs*, January 25, 1899.

"Every temptation that could be brought against fallen humanity, He met and overcame . . . Had He not been fully human, He could not have been our substitute."—*Bible Echo*, August 2, 1897.

Because Christ took the humanity we daily live

with, He had to resist sin just as we do. How then did He succeed? Did He rely on His divinity to help Him? No, no. We are never told that in Scripture. Instead, we are told that He trusted in a divine power outside of Himself. By faith, He received power from God to help Him overcome. Through the life, death, and mediation of Christ, that power is available to us also!

"Christ took upon Himself our infirmities, and in the weakness of humanity He needed to seek strength from the Father."—*Review*, October 11, 1881.

"Here He lived as a man among men, meeting the temptations that we must meet, and overcoming through strength from above. By His sinless life He demonstrated that through the power of God it is possible for man to withstand Satan's temptations."—*The Watchman*, February 26, 1907.

He came down fully to our level. The ladder reached all the way to the ground where we stand; not the mountaintop up in the clouds where unfallen Adam stood.

"He suffered every phase of trial and temptation with which humanity is beset."—*Manuscript* 35, 1895.

"He had all the strength of the passion of humanity."—*Signs*, November 21, 1892.

He had the strength of the inherited tendencies to passion, but He did not have the passion itself. For He never once chose to indulge in sin. He never once yielded. In full reliance upon His Father for help, He stood firm as a rock for the right. He was sinless.

"But many say that Jesus was not like us, that He was not as we are in the world, that He was divine, and therefore we cannot overcome as He overcame. But this is not true. 'For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.' (Hebrews 2:16) . . . He took upon Himself our nature."—*Bible Echo*, November 1, 1892.

The plan of salvation required that Christ, who was fully God, become fully man—and in our fallen nature, live a perfectly clean, sinless life. His sacrificial death on Calvary, and His mediation in the Sanctuary above, provide the atonement by which we may be saved. For, from heaven, Jesus provides His followers with enabling grace so they, too, can obey the Father's law, just as Jesus did while on earth!

"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."—*Desire of Ages*, 117.

"As Jesus was in human nature, so God means His followers to be."—*Signs*, April 1, 1897.

"The Saviour took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity, and on this earth lived a sinless life that men should have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they would not be able to overcome."—*Manuscript 51*, 1903.

So there is the glorious truth of the human nature of Christ! Can you now see why it is a bedrock truth,—a truth the entire atonement is based upon? If Christ did not take our nature, if the ladder did not reach all the way,—we would be hopelessly lost. We could not be saved. We could not go to heaven.

IT IS A GREAT EVIL TO TRY TO DESTROY THIS TRUTH FROM MEN'S MINDS

But, unfortunately, men are trying to do just that. They are working at cross-purposes with God. They are trying to convince men that it is not necessary to obey God's Holy Word.

The excuse they give is that they fear "perfectionism." What they really fear is that they might have to put away their own sins and give up their darling idols. What is more evil than inventing a religious teaching which excuses sin, and then tries to deceive thousands into believing that lie! These men assuage their sense of guilt, by finding comfort in the number of people they can convert to their error. They draw assurance from the many on their side—that they must be right: that God will not punish them for holding onto their cherished sins.

Surely, theirs is an evil work, and, if those men do not repent, ere long it will bring the wrath of God and a burning in hellfire.

It is bad enough when Catholic priests and Protestant pastors convert their flocks to the hideous teaching that it is safe to sin. But when men, funded by the tithe in the Adventist denomination, use that support to spread their deception that men can have salvation in sin, the sin becomes profoundly great.

Who can give an atonement for the souls of such men?

"He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that He can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God."—*Review*, March 10, 1904.

That which makes the evil even worse is that so many of these men have had great light. They have had the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. They know

that both teach that Christ took our fallen nature. The truth is so obvious that only those believing the most carefully-crafted deception can withstand it.

Some of these men, such as Helmut Ott and Morris Venden, have declared that those who try to obey God's law, will be lost in perdition unless they repent. It is claimed that man can only be saved by sitting back and letting God do it for him.

But God's Word assures us that unless we do our part, we will not—we cannot—be saved. We must personally choose to resist temptation and sin. We must actively, sacrificially obey the teachings found in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

THE ROY ADAMS BOOK

A basic landmark in the ongoing apostasy of the leadership of our denomination occurred this year, 1994. The Review and Herald Publishing Association published the book, *The Nature of Christ: Help for a Church Divided Over Perfection*. It is being advertised in denominational journals and sold in our bookstores.

The book purports to explain that Christ took the nature of unfallen Adam, that our leaders and writers—with the exception of three men—all taught it until recent times, and that it is the only teaching in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

But such a contention is blatantly untrue!

"My thesis throughout is that the theology of these three men [A.T. Jones, E.J. Waggoner, and M.L. Andreason] has provided the spawning ground for the position on righteousness by faith and perfection held by certain Adventists today . . .

"Without a doubt, the roots of the present agitation go all the way back to Jones and Waggoner."—*Page 29*.

Yes, such a claim is blatantly untrue. A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner primarily spoke and wrote on this subject between 1891 and 1901. But Ellen White and other of our pioneer leaders were writing on the subject all the way back to the early 1850s. This is abundantly verified by Ralph Larson's excellent book, *The Word Was Made Flesh*.

Repeatedly, our early leaders taught the Bible truth that Jesus took our human nature, not Adam's unfallen nature. And they showed that this great truth was a bedrock truth underlying the fact that, in Christ, we too can resist and overcome sin—and overcome as Christ overcame—by relying on divine power!

The ten spies in the wilderness brought a lying report to the people, which caused so many to miss out on Canaan. Men today are knowingly bringing equally false reports. I say "knowingly" advisedly. There is far too much detail referred to, in Adams' book, for it to be the work of individuals unac-

quainted with the writings of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and our earlier leaders.

In a recent study, Ralph Larson described the situation well:

“By the end of the year 1898, other church leaders had published their own views on the nature of Christ, not different from hers, a total of 76 times. (See *The Word Was Made Flesh*.) This number does not include statements from Jones and Waggoner. It does include statements from such other church leaders as James White, Uriah Smith, Stephen Haskell, W.W. Prescott, J.H. Waggoner, M.C. Wilcox, R.A. Underwood, Alton Farnsworth, Elgin Farnsworth, W.H. Glenn, J.E. Evans, William Covert, J.H. Durland, G.C. Tenny, G.E. Fifield, and others. These writers did not mute their messages. The total includes nine editorials and five front page editorials . . .

“And let us not overlook the fact that while Jones and Waggoner were co-editors of the *Signs of the Times* (1885-1891), they published, in that journal, three statements by Ellen White that Christ had come to earth in the human nature of fallen man. In the years 1890-1891, Waggoner, as sole editor, published five more. Meanwhile, Jones, as editor of the *Review* (1887-1891), published eleven such statements in that journal . . .

“Jones and Waggoner, far from being innovators or teachers of the new doctrines, were actually standing firmly in the mainstream of Seventh-day Adventist theology, regarding the nature of Christ and character perfection. Their teachings were emphatically not the root of those doctrines; they were rather the fruit . . .

“In our *The Word Was Made Flesh*, we document 1,200 statements on the nature of Christ that were published by our church leaders between the years 1852 and 1952, 400 of them by Ellen White. During that same period, until her death in 1915, Ellen White published 4,500 statements regarding character perfection. (See *Tell of His Power*.)”—Ralph Larson, *World-Class Straw Man, Landmarks, June 1994*.

Regarding the teaching that Christ took our nature, not of unfallen Adam, Roy Adams declares that, among our people, only A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner taught it in the nineteenth century. We have viewed the inaccuracy of that idea.

“So in the construction of his world-class straw man, Adams has apparently arbitrarily selected two persons, Jones and Waggoner, from among a large group of Adventist thought leaders, including Ellen White, and assigned to them the responsibility for creating doctrinal attitudes that were actually shared by them all and had been witnessed to by some of them before Jones and Waggoner came along.”—*Ibid*.

What about Adams’ other charge that no leaders taught it in the twentieth century until M.L. An-

dreasen did?

“The perfectionist agitation within the Seventh-day Adventist Church today had its genesis in the post-1888 teachings of A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner . . . The linkage of sanctification, perfection, and Christ’s nature that has become dominant among certain groups is a direct legacy of M.L. Andreason’s theology.”—Page 37.

Ralph Larson, who spent months preparing an in-depth book on the subject, replies to Adams’ second charge:

“This leads us directly to the other proposition in the structure of straw erected by Adams. Was M.L. Andreason a person who accepted strange and new doctrines from Jones and Waggoner and urged them upon the church, or was he only one among a host of witnesses to generally accept these truths? . . .

“In regard to the nature of Christ, we have documented statements by General Conference presidents such as Daniells, Watson, Branson, and McElhany; vice presidents such as Prescott, Thompson, Haynes, Fulton, Olsen, Christian, Rudy, and Hackman; union presidents such as Underwood, Farnsworth, Slade, and Turner; local conference presidents such as Farnsworth and Evans; *Signs and Review* editors and associate editors such as M.C. Wilcox, G.C. Tenney, W.H. Glenn, Uriah Smith, F.D. Nichol, Oscar Tait, Alonzo Baker, C.M. Snow, and F.M. Wilcox; the first president of our theological seminary, M.E. Kern; seminary teacher, L.E. Fromm; college president, W.E. Howell; other teachers and leaders including T.M. French, Merlin Neff, L.C. Wilcox, Meade Macquire, C.L. Bond, and J.E. Fulton; and many, many others . . .

“We did not find a single evidence that any of our leaders or believers held a different view from the mainstream on either the nature of Christ or character perfection until the mid 1900s—not one. And let it be remembered that we made it our goal to examine every article or book that had been published in the English language during the period of 1852-1952”—*Ibid*.

Well, now we have a far better understanding of Roy Adams’ book,—a book which is being highly recommended by many of our denominational leaders.

It is of the highest significance that the liberals in our church are praising Adams’ book the most. Those who are weakest on reproving sin, upholding standards, or urging men and women to obey the law of God;—these are the ones who are especially urging our people to read and believe Roy Adams’ book.

But, of them all, the highest praises have been sung by none other than Desmond Ford! He simply raves about Adams’ book.

WHAT FORD SAYS ABOUT ADAMS' BOOK

Desmond Ford, the most active breakaway liberal among us in the past several decades, lauds the book—and for two special reasons: (1) because he fully believes what it teaches, but (2)—because it represents a major victory for the liberals in the entire Adventist denomination!

“At last! After a century and a half, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has published a book devoted entirely to the vital subject of the sinless nature of Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

“For nearly fifty years, the denomination has been rent by divisions over this issue [37 years: 1957, when *Questions on Doctrine* was printed, on down to the present time].

“The denomination’s major university, Andrews University, has for nearly half a century clearly taught that our Lord’s spiritual nature was like that of Adam—without spot or blemish. Still, the denomination’s publishing houses have hesitated to proclaim that truth in any publication of scholarly responses that many have longed to make.”—*Desmond Ford, A Book Review, Good News Unlimited, July 1994.*

For the record, Andrews was not teaching the unfallen nature between 1955 and 1958. But, three months after the present writer graduated from that institution, Desmond Ford arrived and, I have been told, urged Edward Heppenstall to come out in the open with his beliefs.

Ford can hardly lavish enough praise for Adams’ book.

I recommend Roy Adams’ book wholeheartedly. It reminds me of *Perfect in Christ*, by Helmut Ott, which was published in 1987 by the same publishers. Ott’s book, which I also heartily recommend, is of the same genre. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this review, Roy Adams’ *The Nature of Christ* is (as far as I know) a first in Adventist publications. It is the first official S.D.A. book to affirm the sinless nature of Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We salute the author and the publishers.—*Ibid.*

Intriguingly enough, Ford, in his book review, differs with Adams on two points: (1) Ford says he takes a more open stand on the error of St. Augustine, that we are locked into sin, by means of “original sin” from Adam.

“First, as with many modern theologians, Roy does not like to speak of mankind inheriting guilt from Adam.”—*Ibid.*

(2) Ford maintains that it was not possible for Christ not to succeed. It was an easy victory, since He could not really sin anyway (since He supposedly had Adam’s unfallen nature). So there was little sacrifice in coming to earth, living here for a time and then dying on the cross.

“Second, Dr. Adams takes the popular Adventist view (found in Ellen White’s writings) that the des-

tiny of the human race hung in the balance when Christ came to earth. There was no absolute certainty that Christ would overcome and conquer and successfully complete the Atonement. In other words, Christ could have sinned . . .

“The salvation of the human race did not hang in the balance when Christ came. Success was absolutely certain. Success had been predicted with full assurance—Christ’s provision of salvation would, indeed, eventuate on behalf of the whole human race.”—*Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

It was stated, at the beginning of this article, that there can be few evils more terrible for one who knows the Spirit of Prophecy writings, to attempt to lead everyone in the church into the belief that they no longer need to obey God’s Inspired Writings or His laws.

Let us say it again: Why is it such a terrible evil? Because the God of heaven committed the special message of Revelation 14:6-12—the Third Angel’s Message—to this people. And for anyone to attempt to turn them from their assigned task—to live and preach obedience to the law of God—is unmitigated evil of the very worst sort.

A correct understanding of the nature of Christ is part of the Third Angel’s Message! As we clearly saw from Ralph Larson’s comments, Roy Adams’ book is founded on a terrible untruth.

Read what the Bible says about the matter:

“God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”—*Romans 8:3.*

“Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”—*Romans 1:3.*

“For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”—*Hebrews 2:11.*

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.”—*Hebrews 2:14.*

“For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.”—*Hebrews 2:16.*

“Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren.”—*Hebrews 2:17.*

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”—*John 1:14.*

May God have mercy on His people! There is so little time left, and there are so many false teachers!

—Vance Ferrell