

THE INCARNATION

There is so much about the incarnation that I do not understand. I am perfectly willing to grant that you can ask me questions about this subject that I am not able to answer. But there are some broad principles that we would do well to consider. It is impossible to have a correct view of this subject without having a correct view of the nature of man.

P R E F A C E

Among God's people today there is much discussion of the nature of Christ. On one side we find those who take a position similar to the Protestant view. They assert that He really did not possess the humanity of mankind. They believe that Jesus lived in a "shell" of this body, as a divine being. Yet on the other side of the issue are those who make Christ altogether like us. They will assure you that Christ had temptations from within, that He inherited sinful weaknesses, traits, and propensities.

This booklet is a record of a discussion by Robert Brinsmead on this vital topic. Not only are the issues clearly defined, but the practical importance of a true understanding of the nature of Christ is set forth. Carefully study this little booklet. May it give you a clearer insight into the precious truths God has intrusted with the final generation.

The Publishers

The Human Organism

When God created man from the dust of the earth, He gave him a living *organism* which contained physical, mental, and moral powers. All these powers were equally developed and harmoniously balanced. This organism is called *the body*. Among the majority of professed Christian people, the body does not assume very much importance. But with our concept of truth as given in the third angel's message, the body assumes great importance. A few statements will suffice to illustrate this:

"The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the up-building of character." — *Ministry of Healing*, p. 130.

"Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; . . . Therefore the health should be as faithfully guarded as the character." — *Education*, p. 195.

"Sanctification — how many understand its full meaning? The mind is befogged by sensual malaria. The thoughts need purifying. What might not men and women have been had they realized that the treatment of the body has everything to do with the vigor and purity of mind and heart." — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 909.

(For detailed information on the interrelation of the physical, mental, and moral powers and their relation to the character, I refer you to *Syllabus* No. 3, Lessons 1 and 8.)

It is this concept of the body which gives such importance to the health message in true Adventist thinking. On the other hand, the typical Protestant thinks of the soul as being some metaphysical entity that

is scarcely affected by our treatment of the body.

Consider the effect of the fall on the human organism. In his sinless state, Adam's physical, mental and moral powers were all harmoniously balanced. But sin and the indulgence of appetite has had a terrible effect upon the human organism. Not only have the physical, mental and moral powers been weakened, but they have been put out of balance. The lower nature, with its animal appetites, has strengthened out of proportion to the higher powers of man. This gives Satan a greater advantage in tempting man. But these weakened powers do not constitute character:

"The mental and moral powers which God has given us do not constitute character. They are talents . . ." — *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 606.

So it is vital to remember that when we are talking about the weakened physical, mental and moral powers, we are not talking about the character, the heart or the mind. Howbeit these powers of the organism have a vital effect upon the character.

One of the doctors here was commenting yesterday about the condition of a person who is excessively alkaline in body. He said that such a person's nerves are all taut, and he feels like jumping on everybody. Now this condition of body does not imply that there is a derangement of the character. It does not mean that there is a malady in the mind or spiritual heart. But it does mean that with this condition it would be harder to maintain purity of thought and nobility of character. If a man presumptuously ill-treats his body, can he expect that God will work a miracle to help him preserve purity of thought? Certainly not! But if on the other hand a man were thrown into a dirty jail and ill-kept as Jerome was, will God be willing to work a miracle so that the sufferer can preserve purity of thought and uprightness of character? (Audience: He did it for John the Baptist.) Yes, He will indeed. Thus we see that the condition of the body has a tremendous influence upon the spiritual nature of man.

I remember reading in one of the General Conference Bulletins about a woman who came to Dr. Kellogg for spiritual help. At

that time, the doctor was a great spiritual counsellor as well as a physical one. This woman said that she constantly felt irritable and experienced great difficulty controlling her thoughts in the right channel. So the doctor said: "Let me have a look at your tongue." "My tongue," she said in surprise, for she was seeking spiritual help, not physical. When the doctor saw the tongue, he said something like this: "Of course you will have trouble with your thoughts with a tongue like that. The cells of your brain are bathed with impure blood, and under these conditions you cannot maintain purity of thought."

Christ Took Our Organism

Now we must have these principles firmly in mind when we come to consider the human nature of Christ. Jesus dwelt in a body like ours. He inherited a body that had been weakened by four thousand years of sin (*Desire of Ages*, p. 49). During a discussion of this question with a group of students from Andrews University, one of the group endeavored to illustrate Christ's likeness to us. He took hold of the skin on his arm and said, "Skin, skin." I replied: "Christ's likeness to us was more than skin. It was more than skin deep." The young man failed to consider the importance and the place of the whole body in the nature of man. The body, the whole human organism, includes the physical, mental and moral powers. Christ took our human organism, our human faculties:

"He employed the human faculties, . . . He lived out the character of God through the human body which God had prepared for Him." — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 924.

"When Jesus took human nature, and became in fashion as a man, He possessed all the human organism." — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1130.

It is clear that Jesus did not come to live in a human organism like unto Adam's in his perfect state. Hebrews 2:14 says that He took the same flesh and blood as the children of Adam. And since a weakness of the physical powers brings a corresponding weakness to the mental and moral powers, it is perfectly clear that Jesus actually lived in a human body which possessed all the weakened powers of man.

"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." — *Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

Christ's life shows that He could be tempted through the avenue of appetite the same as we can be tempted. Man's animal appetites had been strengthening for centuries out of proportion to the higher powers. Christ knew what temptation was through these avenues, for He had taken upon Himself that inherited nature. But such temptation is not sin. That a man feels temptation because of strong appetite which clamours for indulgence does not imply a sinful condition, nor is it evidence of a defective condition in the spiritual heart. But the avenues of the senses give Satan a tremendous leverage in trying to influence the heart. In this respect, Satan worked to tempt Christ the same as he works to tempt us.

Sin Not a Constitutional Problem

It is tremendously important that we understand that sin is not a bodily malady. The apostle Paul says:

"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is *without* the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

This is a very clear statement. How many sins are without the body? Every sin is without the body. Then the apostle remarks that although every sin is without the body, he goes on to say that fornication is *against* (harmful to) the body. But although fornication and other sins may be harmful to the body, it remains that "every sin that a man doeth is *without* the body." What does Paul mean? Just this, the body, the organism, the living constitution is a material structure. The apostle wants us to understand that sin is not a constitutional malady or an organic problem. When a man sins, the problem does

not exist in the body. The body is physical and material, but sin is not a physical or material thing. Sin has to do with the spiritual nature, the spiritual heart, the mind, the character. For this reason Jesus could say that a man is not defiled by things going into the body. In Colossians, the apostle speaks of those who flagellate the body, but who find "it no use at all in combating sensuality" (Colossians 2:23 NEB). The reason they find such flagellation of the flesh useless is that the problem is not in the flesh itself. Sin is a malady of the *human spirit*. The apostle Paul says: "Be renewed in the *spirit* of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23). When we are dealing with man's sinful condition, we are dealing with the *spirit* of his mind. Sin is a corruption of the human spirit and the natural man is controlled by "the *spirit* . . . of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

The Meaning of Sinful Nature

Much confusion is caused by a failure to define our terms, or by using terms without due consideration of their meaning. This is particularly true in regard to what is often called "the sinful nature." The expression is not used in the Bible, although one meaning the same thing is used:

"Ye walked according to . . . the spirit . . . of disobedience; . . . and were by *nature* the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:2, 3).

By *nature* the inspired writer does not mean the organism which is called the body. He means the *spirit*. He goes on to show that because of this "sinful nature" man needs to be renewed in the spirit of his mind. He does not need to be renewed in body to get rid of sin. He needs a change of spirit, not a change of faculties.

Let us see how the Spirit of Prophecy sometimes uses the word *nature* in the same way — meaning, not the body, but the spiritual nature of man.

"The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. By *nature* we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: 'Dead in trespasses and sins;' . . . God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of

our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him." — *Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

"Men do not know their own hearts; for the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 17:9. But God understands the tendencies of the depraved nature of man." — *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 688.

It is evident that the servant of the Lord uses *heart* and *nature* interchangeably. The whole nature must be changed. This is not referring to the flesh. If we are going to be successful in dealing a blow at the enemy, we should know where this enemy is. It is the human heart, the human spirit. The word *nature* in these instances refers to the character. It means the *disposition*.

We use similar expressions in everyday English. If you say that "Bill has a good nature," do you mean that his bodily form is such that would be admired by the Greeks? No! You obviously mean he has a good disposition, or a good spirit. If you say that another man has a mean nature, you are simply saying that the person is mean. If he has a happy nature, what is he? He is happy! Why is he happy? Because he has a happy nature. As the nature is, so will the man be. As the tree is, so the fruit will be. If you said that a certain person has an evil nature, you would be taken to mean that he is evil. Now, if a person *has* a sinful nature, that means he is sinful. We are not referring to the condition of his body, but to the condition of his heart. A man with a sinful nature is a man with a sinful heart. It is as plain as that. This condition of sinful nature is clearly described in the Bible:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 8:7).

The *sinful nature* is just another term for the selfish, wicked, sinful heart of man. It is the carnal mind whose spirit of disobedience is contrary to the law of God.

The Laws of Inheritance

It is clear that we inherit our human organism from our parents. The physical, mental and moral powers of the human organism are inherited. This fact is so well known and so easy to demonstrate that we will not tarry to give proof for this self-evident fact.

But we inherit more than a weakened and degenerate human organism. We are born in a sinful condition. We all enter the world having a carnal mind, possessing a corruption of the human spirit (Psalms 51:5; Romans 8:7; Psalms 58:3 etc.). Defects of character are inherited (*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 282, 167; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 277, 278). Let us not detour off on some scientific explanation as to how this sinful condition of heart and mind is inherited. Thinking about genes and chromosomes will not help us at all. Inspiration does not tell us by what *mechanism* this corruption of the human spirit is transmitted from generation to generation. It is a great mystery. But we do know that the law of bringing forth "after his kind" operates in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical. Genes and chromosomes might serve to explain our constitutional inheritance, but they do not explain how that our sinful hearts have been transmitted to us.

The mind which we possess by nature is the sinful mind. The expression "carnal mind" literally reads "the mind of the flesh" (Romans 8:7). The apostle Paul sometimes refers to this mind as "the flesh," not that it is composed of tissues, but because it is born of the flesh. Jesus said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). We should also bear this in mind. When the apostle admonishes us to crucify the flesh, he does not mean that we are to inflict pain on the body. He is simply telling us that sin must be expelled from the heart.

Did Christ Have a Carnal Mind?

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14).

What did Jesus partake of? The same flesh and blood as we do. In Hebrews 10:5 we read: "A body hast thou prepared me." "Flesh and blood" in this instance refers to the body that Jesus lived in. Continuing, the apostle says:

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:17).

Are we going to say to Paul, "Do not make Christ 'altogether human, such an one as ourselves: for this cannot be'" (S.D.A.

Bible Commentary, Vol. 5, p. 1129). No, for Paul is referring to the body. Christ possessed the whole human organism with the weaknesses of physical, mental and moral powers. When we understand the close relation of the body and the character, we can appreciate what a tremendous liability this was to the Saviour. In contrast with his tempting Adam, see the great advantage Satan had when he brought temptation to Christ.

While Satan was able to bruise the heel of the Saviour, He was not able to touch his head (*Genesis 3:15*; *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1131). In the normal course of birth we inherit not only the degenerate organism, but the *carnal mind, the faulty character, the corrupted spirit, the rebellious heart, the sinful nature*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Our mind therefore, is the "mind of the flesh." In this carnal mind lies the seat of the sin problem, for it is enmity against God: it is not subject to His law, nor ever can be (*Romans 8:7*). But it cannot be said of the Lord Jesus Christ that he had "the mind of the flesh." Why? He was not born of the flesh. Jesus was born in the flesh, but not of the flesh. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (*John 3:6*). Thus while it was true that Satan could touch the *heel* of Christ and had free access to the *heel* of Christ, Satan could not touch the *head* of Christ and had no access to the *head* of Christ. Jesus did not have the mind of the flesh. He had the mind of the Spirit. He had the mind of the Spirit because He was born of the Spirit. Jesus was not born in the normal course and He did not have a carnal mind.

Nowhere in Inspiration will it be found that Jesus had a *carnal mind* or that He had a sinful nature. When we read that He "took" the sinful nature from Mary, we must not forget that this nature which was taken from Mary came into contact with His divinity. As to what happened when His divinity touched humanity is forcefully illustrated in this passage:

"But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no defilement. His touch imparted life-giving power. The leprosy was cleansed. Thus it is with the leprosy of sin, — deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleansed by human power. 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart

faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.' *Isa. 1:5, 6*. But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner." — *Desire of Ages*, p. 266.

Since we may only receive what has already been wrought out for us in Christ (*Desire of Ages*, 671), we must notice what happens when His divinity touches humanity. Does the pollution of human nature defile His divinity? No! His divinity sanctifies humanity. Thus when Christ came to dwell in this "house" of human flesh, we may say that although the "house" was deteriorated through the effects of sin, yet we cannot say that there was any sin or sinfulness in that "house."

We may know these things by personal experience. When we receive into our hearts the Holy Spirit, does not this divine nature expel sin from our lives? Does not He change and sanctify our natures? Of course He does not do it absolutely and completely in us immediately because we do not receive the full measure of the Holy Spirit all at once. But in the case of Christ, He was filled with all the fullness of the Godhead from the time of the incarnation. Notice these clear statements:

"Possessing our nature, though unstained by sin . . ." — *Review & Herald*, May 7, 1901.

"He [Christ] was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man." — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 925.

"We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ." — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1131.

Could statements be plainer? His human nature was not sinful. God forbid! It was sinless. Whilst we are born with a defiled nature, when He was born, His human nature was undefiled by sin. The servant of the Lord does not say: ". . . sinlessness of the human deeds of Christ," but ". . . sinlessness of the human nature of Christ."

Jesus had only one human nature. That human nature was sinless and unstained.

"The human nature of Christ is likened to ours, and suffering was more keenly felt by Him for His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin." — *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 653.

Notice that the statement is referring to the human nature of Christ. His spiritual nature — the spirit, the mind, the character — was free from any sinfulness.

A Warning from the Spirit of Prophecy

"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.

"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 God 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 I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.'

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

Notice again: "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." Some may say, "Well, He had such inclinations to sin, but He did not yield to them." But there are three things stated: not a "taint of," not an "inclination to," and "never yielded to."

Our attempts to do too much explaining are a snare. For instance, the Scripture says that Christ was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." So, Nicodemus-like, we start reasoning, "How can these things be? My temptations come from my crooked personality, my wicked heart, and my inherited and cultivated defects of character. So if Jesus were to be really tempted as I am tempted, He would have to have my crooked personality, my wicked heart and my inherited and cultivated defects of character." Another takes the "logic" a little further. "I am a woman. How could Christ be tempted in all points like me?" Another says: "I am a married man," or "I am an old man." Against all this vain questioning, Inspiration simply says:

"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." — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129.

A. T. Jones and the Nature of Christ

Outside of the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, A. T. Jones was foremost in presenting the great truths of the incarnation in the years around 1888. From the reading of *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 408, it seems that his forceful presentations of the incarnation were evoking some opposition. But Mrs. White took the side of the message brought by Jones. Jones had a very aggres-

sive and positive nature, and as often happens in religious controversy, there is a tendency to counteract error by going too far to the other side of the road. Jones did this in the matter of faith and works, calling forth some strong words of caution from the prophet (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 377). Mrs. White did not say that Jones was wrong in his thinking, but that his expressions were exaggerated. There is evidence that he showed the same tendency in dealing with the great subject of the incarnation. His teachings and his mode of expression, were having their effects upon the writers and leading teachers of the denomination. In the year 1895, Mrs. White wrote the words of counsel and caution which are quoted in full above.

A. T. Jones was basically correct in his teaching on the incarnation, but when reading some of his expressions, we can appreciate the caution of Ellen G. White: "Be careful, exceedingly careful, as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ." In his comments upon "the likeness of sinful flesh" in Romans 8:3, Jones often eliminated the word "likeness," and said that Christ had our *sinful flesh*. Practically every Adventist writer followed his example with one notable exception—Ellen G. White. NEVER does the Spirit of Prophecy eliminate "likeness" from Romans 8:3.

In reading Jones' studies it is evident what he meant by "sinful flesh." Using Hebrews 2, he equated it with the degenerate human body. Evidently, he did not grasp Paul's meaning of "flesh" in Romans 8*, for Jones is certain that Christ did not have man's sinful mind:

"Now as to Christ having like passions with us, in the Scripture all the way through, He was like us and with us according to the flesh. He is the seed of David according to the flesh. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the likeness of sinful mind. Do not drag His mind into it. His flesh was our flesh, but the mind was the mind of Christ Jesus." — *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, Lesson No. 17, *The Third Angel's Message*.

* *Flesh* does not always mean body, but in some places has the same meaning as defined by Jesus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Thus Paul calls the carnal mind *flesh* because it is of carnal generation.

Jones never intended to mean that Christ had a carnal mind. The important thing is to ascertain what a man means, and not dwell on the particular form of words he uses to express the thought. Some of the inspired writers did not always choose the ideal word. The apostle Paul uses the same word to mean different things (Compare Romans 8:8 and Galatians 2:20). We should always be careful to judge a man's teaching by what he means lest we make a man an offender by a word.

The Brinsmead Teaching

In my own writings — *God's Eternal Purpose* (1959), *Syllabus No. 1* (1961), *Syllabus No. 2* (1962), *Syllabus No. 3* (1964) — the subject of the incarnation is dealt with at length. There is a development of expression over the years of the awakening message. I have not felt it necessary to keep saying the same things over and over in the same words for the last six or seven years. And by the grace of God, I think we have learned a few things. On the one hand, some of the good brethren say: "He has put his feet in concrete and will not change his teaching on anything." On the other hand some of the good brethren say: "See, he is changing his teaching."

A deeper study of the nature of man has made it more apparent why Ellen G. White never eliminated the word *likeness* when citing Romans 8:3. The word *flesh* as used by Paul does not always mean the physical body, but sometimes means that which is born of the flesh. Thus Paul calls the carnal mind *flesh* (See study, *The Man of Romans 8*). *God's Eternal Purpose*, (my first book) does not eliminate "likeness" from Romans 8:3. Recently, I see more reason for following the example of Paul and Ellen G. White.

The basic teaching and direction of my views on the incarnation remain unchanged. I could illustrate this by re-affirming the remarks found in *Syllabus No. 2*.

"Christ certainly partook of fallen human nature. The Sinless One came to tabernacle in human flesh which had upon it the effects of four thousand years of sin. Thus He did not merely take the physical degeneracy of humanity, but that fallen nature which bore the physical,

mental, and moral degeneracy of the race. On His human side, the physical, mental, and moral powers of Christ's human nature had the weaknesses, tendencies,* and infirmities of the human race.

"Being born of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit brought Christ into the world possessing the immaculate spiritual nature of His own eternal pre-existence. In Christ's heart, mind, will, affections, He was without the taint of, or inclination to sin. In His heart, will, mind, affections, there was no tendency, inclination, bent or propensity to evil. Thus the Sinless One in coming to dwell in humanity, received no pollution." pp. 17, 18.

This has been my teaching since the beginning of my public speaking.

The Application to Experience

How we apply the great truths of the incarnation to our lives is most important. I will now cite the *General Conclusions* on the study on the Incarnation from *Syllabus* No. 3, p. 32.

"The incarnation is a revelation of God's purpose for man. We are to know that the Father wants to treat us the same way as He treated Jesus. It would please God to bestow on us nothing less than He bestowed on His Son. 'And the grace that He received is for us.' DA 73. 'His experience is to be ours.' DA 363. Therefore we can confidently draw the following conclusions:

"1. In Jesus we see a Man born by, and filled with the Holy Spirit. His life testifies that degenerate physical, mental, and moral powers are no excuse for sin. (Romans 8:3).

"He came as a helpless babe, bearing the humanity we bear.' 'As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.' He could not come in the form of an angel; for unless He met man as man, and testified by His connection with God that divine power was not given to Him in a different way to what it will be given to us, He could not be a perfect example for us. He came in humility, in order that the humblest being upon the face of the earth could have no excuse because of his poverty, or ignorance, and say, Because of these things, I cannot obey the law of Jehovah, 7 BC 925.

"Therefore, when man is 'filled with all the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:19), through the complete infilling of the Spirit, the function of his weakened faculties will be sinless and holy.

"2. In Jesus we see a Man born by, and filled with the Holy Spirit. He had no evil propensities or inclinations. His motives and traits of character were without a taint of sin. In short, His nature was pure and holy.

"Therefore, when man is 'filled with all the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:19), through the complete infilling of the Spirit, he will be without sinful propensities, and his nature will be pure and holy.

"We need not retain one sinful propensity . . . ' 7 BC 943.

"The transformation of character must take place before His coming. Our natures must be pure and holy. . . ' OHC 278.

"3. 'Christ's overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being.' 7 BC 929. 'His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.' DA 24. 'Those only who through faith in Christ obey all of God's commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. They testify to their love of Christ by obeying all His precepts.' 6 BC 1118. This is the very substance of the third angel's message: 'Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' Rev. 14:12.

"The life of Jesus of Nazareth testifies that all this is God's purpose for humanity in this life. To man is offered the same joy, love, peace, contentment and pleasure of uninhibited fellowship with God that Jesus experienced. Let us ever remember as we study and contemplate the life of Jesus, that His life is the revelation of man's potential with God and man. Everything that the human nature of Christ was in this life, human nature today may be through the same grace as He received. This is the hope, and must be the faith of those who will be sealed for eternity and who will be translated from this earth."

The Holy Flesh Charge

The awakening message has nothing to do with holy flesh. Sin does not dwell in the flesh as such. It dwells in the heart, the mind, the character. Many of you have seen the flannelgraph of the sanctuary with the sanctuary of the heart underneath the tabernacle of Moses. We have been concerned with the doctrine of a cleansed heart. When the servant of the Lord tells us that "our natures must be pure and holy" (*Our High Calling*, p. 278) before Jesus comes, is she referring to the flesh? Of course not! She means that our hearts, our dispositions, our characters, our spirits, must be in a condition of holiness before the Lord comes. This has nothing to do with *holy flesh*.

* As the context shows, not meaning sinful tendencies. Sin is a condition of the heart, will, mind, affections. There was no tendency to sin here where Christ was concerned.

"The reception of this gift will eradicate from the heart all selfishness, and transform its possessor into the image of Him Who abides in the heart by faith." — *Review & Herald*, May 22, 1894.

"Let selfishness be rooted out of the heart. In the life of Christ there was no fibre of selfishness." — *Review & Herald*, November 30, 1897.

"Selfishness is the essence of depravity." — *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 25.

Here we are told to eradicate or root out all selfishness from our hearts. This element of selfishness is nothing else but the sinful nature which must be utterly abolished from the hearts of God's people. The sinful nature is the carnal mind, the selfish mind, the mind of the flesh. It is to be eradicated, weeded out, rooted up until no fiber is left. Just as Jesus was born of the Spirit and possessed no sinful human nature, so God is calling a people to make practical application of the great truth of the incarnation. If this is what you call holy flesh, then I believe in it, for it is the everlasting gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Importance of Correct Teaching

Some tell us that the gospel does not make provision for the eradication of this sinful nature. The only question to be decided is: Did Christ have a sinful human nature? Did He possess a rebellious disposition, a wicked heart, a carnal mind, propensities to disobedience? God forbid! If the human nature of Jesus was sinless, ours too may be sinless. If His humanity had no carnal mind and no sinful propensities then that experience is available to us also. Otherwise it could not be said that "His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess" — *Desire of Ages*, p. 664.

APPENDIX

Additional Thoughts on the Incarnation

The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ in human flesh is a mystery, "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" (Col. 1:26). It is the great and profound mystery of godliness. — *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 246.

The work of redemption is called a mystery, and it is indeed the mystery by which everlasting righteousness is brought to all who believe. The race, in consequence of sin, was at enmity with God. Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity. — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 915.

The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden linked chain which binds our souls to Christ and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man, and He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. And He was God in the flesh.

When we approach the subject of Christ's divinity clothed with the garb of humanity, we may appropriately heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We must come to the study of this subject with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, and will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth. — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 904, 905.

When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven — the incarnation of the Son of God. — *That I May Know Him*, p. 25.

This is a great mystery, a mystery that will not be fully, completely understood in all its greatness until the translation of the redeemed shall take place. — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1113.

The study of the incarnation of Christ, His atoning sacrifice and mediatorial work, will employ the mind of the diligent student as long as time shall last. — *Gospel Workers*, p. 251.

But although Christ's divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. The human did not take the place of the divine, nor the divine of the human. This is

the mystery of godliness. The two expressions "human" and "divine" were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality. Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1129.

Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one. It is in this union that we find the hope of our fallen race. — *Signs of the Times*, July 30, 1896.

The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature. The Power of the Saviour's Godhead was hidden. He overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power. — *Youth's Instructor*, April 25, 1901.

We need not place the obedience of Christ by itself, as something for which He was particularly adapted, by His particular divine nature, for He stood before God as man's representative and was tempted as man's substitute and surety. If Christ had a special power which it is not the privilege of man to have, Satan would have made capital of this matter. — *That I May Know Him*, p. 34.

Christ's overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity . . .

Jesus, the world's Redeemer, could only keep the commandments of God in the same way that humanity can keep them. — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 929.

Christ did not make believe take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature. — *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 247.

But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. — *Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

He not only became an exile from the heavenly courts, but for us took the risk of failure and eternal loss. — *Desire of Ages*, p. 131.

Christ made a full atonement, giving His life as a ransom for us. He was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family. He did not have a mere semblance of a body, but He took human nature, participating in the life of humanity. — *S. D. A. Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 925.

As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with divinity. Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours. — *Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

While He was free from the taint of sin, the refined sensibilities of His holy nature rendered

contact with evil unspeakably painful to Him. Yet with human nature upon Him, He met the arch-apostate face to face, and single-handed withstood the foe of His throne. Not even by a thought could Christ be brought to yield to the power of temptation. — *Review and Herald*, Nov. 8, 1887.

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. — *Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1896.

Though He had no taint of sin upon His character, yet He condescended to connect our fallen human nature with His divinity. By thus taking humanity, He honored humanity. Having taken our fallen nature, He showed what it might become, by accepting the ample provision He has made for it, and by becoming partaker of the divine nature. — *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 657.

With His human arm, Christ encircled the race, while with His divine arm, He grasped the throne of the Infinite, uniting finite man with the infinite God. He bridged the gulf that sin had made, and connected earth with heaven. In His human nature He maintained the purity of His divine character. — *Youth's Instructor*, June 2, 1898.

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. — *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 508, 509.

In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. — *Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898.

Wondrous combination of man and God! He might have helped His human nature to withstand the inroads of disease by pouring from His divine nature vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. But He humbled Himself to man's nature. — *Review and Herald*, Sept. 4, 1900.

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. — *Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

SUGGESTED READING

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. — *Desire of Ages*, p. 71.

The mental and moral powers which God has given us do not constitute character. They are talents, which we are to improve, and which, if properly improved, will form a right character. . . . The mind is the garden; the character is the fruit. God has given us our faculties to cultivate and develop. Our own course determines our character. — *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 606.

The material listed below will be a blessing to you as you continue your study of the incarnation and related subjects.

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