Jesus Christ: Savior and Example

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Introduction

All those who consider themselves Christian, according to the true sense of the word, embrace the biblical truth that Jesus Christ came to this earth to save the lost (John 3:16, 36). The salvation of humanity was singularly accomplished through Christ's death on the cross. This truth has always been at the center of all Christian confessions throughout the ages of Christian history and is traditionally referred to in theological nomenclature as the *passive* obedience of Christ, that is, His voluntary desire to submit Himself to the ignominy of the cross for the sake of lost humanity. Theologians also speak of Christ's *active* obedience when they refer to His righteous and sinless life through perfect fulfillment of God's law. It is Christ's *active* obedience that qualified Him to become the perfect sacrificial Lamb of God who could take "away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).[1] While distinguished, these two aspects of Christ's saving mission—His *passive* and *active* obedience—must never be separated. "The two accompany each other at every point in the Saviour's life."[2] In His passive obedience, Christ paid the price for the sins of humanity; and as a result of His active obedience, Christ's accomplishments are credited to the believer. Believers appropriate both aspects of Christ's work on behalf of humanity through the means of faith.

But Christ did even more than living righteously and dying for the sake of humanity. He also left behind a supreme example of what it means to lead a holy life. While those who choose to follow the God of the Bible are saved solely through the life and death of Christ, the authors of the biblical account do not shy away from the proposition that genuine conviction on the part of the believer will result in a special kind of life. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore the profound richness found in Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White regarding God's relentless appeal to believers to fulfill His plan for their lives. In the process, I will explore such themes as God's call to holiness during Old Testament times; the identity of Christ and His uniqueness, as well as the extent of His identification with fallen humanity; and finally, the question pertinent to this volume: whether Christ needed to be exactly like us to provide an example of holy living.

The call to holiness during Old Testament times

God is holy! There is little doubt that the holiness of God is one of the most important and prominent themes of the entire Scriptures. In fact, the Hebrew word for "holy," or "to be holy" (*qādaš*), is used to describe one of the most pronounced characteristics of God in the Old Testament.[3]

When God revealed Himself to the Hebrew nation, He did so primarily as a holy Being. "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty," the seraphim exclaim in Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:3). What does it mean that God is holy? The scriptural narrative suggests two basic dimensions of God's holiness. First, God is presented as singularly distinct and separate from all creation (Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Hosea 11:9).[4] Second, there is an ethical dimension to God's holiness; that is, God is holy in the sense that He is opposed to sin and not in any way defiled by it. Thus, He is morally pure and perfect (Leviticus 19:2–37; Isaiah 5:16).[5]

The Old Testament pronouncements of God's holiness are coupled with His desire for His people to also be holy. The call to "be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; 20:26), issued at a crucial time in Israel's history and echoed throughout the rest of the Old Testament, appears to be of utmost importance to the existence of the nation. For the Old Testament writers, God Himself was the source of all holiness, and thus it was He who made His people holy if they chose to follow Him (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12). The holiness to which God called His people clearly was to be grounded in His own two-dimensional vision of holiness. First, Israel was to be His "treasured possession" and thus a separate or distinct nation from other nations (Exodus 19:6; Leviticus 20:26; Deuteronomy 7:6). This was to ensure Israel's ritual purity and exclusive dedication to the service of God.[6] Second, the Hebrew nation was called by God to reflect His moral and ethical character in its actions. This included following God's commandments as well as the righteous treatment of other human beings. The Old Testament recounts examples of people who chose to follow this course of action. "Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" (Genesis 5:24); "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time . . . [who] walked faithfully with God" (Genesis 6:9); Job is spoken of by God as "blameless and upright" (Job 1:8); and David is described as a "man after his [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). Both aspects of holiness—separateness and ethical behavior—were to be exemplified in the nation of Israel and were essential for the fulfillment of God's mission, which is the salvation of all nations (Isaiah 45:21, 22; 66:18–21).

While in the Old Testament God unrelentingly called His people to adhere to a high ethical and moral standard of holiness, He alone was the absolute standard of holiness. The people of God were continually implored to remember His actions, reflect on His moral character, and replicate His characteristics in their daily lives. It must be emphasized, however, that ultimately they were offered salvation because they had put their faith in God, not because they had become morally pure (Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11), and it was this total commitment to God that resulted in godly lives. Thus, throughout the Old Testament, it was God Himself who was the great exemplar of holiness for humanity. Echoes of His call, "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44), reverberate throughout the Old Testament.

The theme of God's holiness continues in the New Testament[7] and, as in the Old Testament, is found to have two basic dimensions: that of separateness from the world (John 17:14; Romans 12:2; Revelation 15:4) and that of ethical or moral holiness (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27). Thus, according to the New Testament writers, Christian holiness was not represented just in their newfound status in Christ (Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 1:9), it was also represented in their characters and thus in their behavior. And once again, God is the great exemplar of both aspects of holiness. Peter thus exhorts the believers: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy' " (1 Peter 1:15, 16). The ethical dimension of God's holiness is also evident in the statements of Jesus, such as, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48) and the parallel in Luke, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36), as well as in Paul's repeated exhortations for believers to live in a manner worthy of "God's holy people" and to resist all forms of temptation and sin (Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). In summary, both the Old and New Testaments urge readers to imitate the holiness of God and thus to be holy.

Jesus as "the holy thing": The uniqueness of Christ in the New Testament

There is one significant difference, however, between the way believers experienced God's holiness in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament pronounced God's holiness through theophanies, divine actions, and the words and writings of the prophets. In addition to these, the New Testament revealed God's holiness in and through the person of Jesus Christ, who was "the exact representation of his [God's] being" (Hebrews 1:3). What do we know about Jesus Christ? The New Testament is clear regarding His nature and identity.

Christ's holiness and divinity. Luke's Gospel account begins with a description of Jesus' conception and birth. According to Luke, the angel told Mary that the Holy Spirit "shall come upon thee," and the power of the Most High "shall overshadow thee." As a result of God's action, the one who was to come from Mary's virgin womb was *hagion*, or the "holy thing," and "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, KJV; the "holy one," NIV). The record of the angel's proclamation leaves one with little doubt as to the special nature of the One who was to be born of Mary. This special Child was not to *become* holy, as was expected of other human beings, but was to *be* holy by nature from the moment of conception. As Derek Tidball notes, "It was [Christ's] nature and character to be separate *from* others, whilst being fully human and sharing human life without reserve."[8] Jesus' extraordinary birth circumstances, the result of a one-of-a-kind divine and human interaction, set Jesus' birth "apart from all other births" and thus confirms His uniqueness.[9] From the time of His birth, Christ was to be *holy* just as His Father in heaven was *holy*.[10] The New Testament writers never discuss how such a birth could be possible or what kind of nature Jesus had.[11] They simply acknowledge that Jesus was "separate" from the rest of humanity by the unique circumstances of His birth.[12]

The concept of Jesus as "the holy one" is

repeated throughout the New Testament, where He is referred to as "the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34) or the Old Testament God, and thus identified as a fully Divine Being. Matthew's Gospel account begins with Jesus being called "Immanuel," or "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). He is spoken of as God (John 1:1; 10:30; 20:28) and referred to as behaving and speaking like God (John 8:58; 14:9). And when Jesus claimed to be "one" with the Father, the Jewish leaders contested His claim, charging Him with blasphemy (John 10:31–33).

Following the example of the Gospel writers, other New Testament authors unabashedly refer to Jesus as God. Paul refers to Christ as "God over all" (Romans 9:5) and "our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13).[13] Similarly, in Philippians 2:6, Jesus is described as "being in very nature God," and in Hebrews 1:8, Jesus is referred to as God: "Your throne, O God, will last forever." Peter also speaks of Jesus as "our God and Savior" (2 Peter 1:1). Thus, the writers of the New Testament unequivocally equate Jesus Christ with God the Father.[14]

Likewise, Ellen G. White identifies Jesus as "a Son begotten in the express image of the Father's person, and in all the brightness of his majesty and glory, *one equal with God in authority*, dignity, and divine perfection. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily";[15] Christ was "equal with the Father from the beginning."[16] Thus, Ellen G. White identifies the preincarnate Christ as the One who spoke to the people of old: "It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, 'I AM THAT I AM,' " and thus revealed God to the patriarch.[17] It was Christ who later led Israel through the pillar of cloud,[18] who instructed Israel and "set up His tabernacle in the midst of our human encampment."[19] It was Christ "who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone."[20] This same God later came "in the likeness of men" and "declared Himself the I AM."[21] "In Christ," she boldly asserts, "is life, original, unborrowed, underived. . . . The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life."[22] It is thus indubitable that both the New Testament and Ellen White present Christ as the great I AM of the Old Testament, fully divine, coeternal and coequal in authority with God the Father.[23]

Christ's full divinity carries deep theological significance for humanity. Most important, it identifies Jesus Christ as the only Savior of humanity. The Old Testament writers are clear that no one can usurp or add to God's work of saving humanity. God declares, "I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior" (Isaiah 43:11). Similarly, God exclaims, "You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me" (Hosea 13:4). As evidenced above, Jesus identifies Himself with the God of the Old Testament. He, the incarnate God of the universe, is thus *the only* Savior of humanity. In other words, no one can contribute anything of substance to God's saving work. Second, because of His full divinity, Christ's death on the cross carries the stamp of all sufficiency. His is the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice, and nothing can be added that would contribute to the salvation of humanity (1 Peter 1:19; Hebrews 9:14; 10:10).

Christ's humanity. While Christ's full, coequal divinity carries enormous significance, it must also be emphasized that the New Testament affirms His full humanity. At one time in history, the preexistent *logos*, who *was God*, became a human being.[24] During the early Christian centuries, some groups—most notably Docetists and Apollinarians—denied the full humanity of Christ.[25] But this is not what we find in the New Testament. Raoul Dederen argues that Paul's assertion that the preincarnate Christ was *morphē theou*, or "in the form of God" (Philippians 2:6, KJV), indicates that He possessed "the essential characteristics and qualities" of being God. In the same way, Paul's declaration that Jesus took *morphē doulou*, or "the form of a servant [slave]" (verse 7), indicates that He embraced "the essential characteristic and qualities that make a human being what it is."[26] Thus, there can be no doubt that Jesus became fully human and that His humanity was "real and complete."[27] To be sure, the Incarnation did not mean that the Second Person of the Godhead ceased to be God when He became human; rather, while remaining God, the incarnate Son of God took upon Himself human nature, thus becoming God and human at the same time. In Jesus, there was a perfect union of His preexistent, divine nature with human nature, which He voluntarily took upon Himself.

The New Testament clearly teaches the full humanity of Jesus. Notwithstanding the miraculous circumstances of His conception, He came into the world through the natural human process of birth. He matured as every human child. While there was no sin in Him, He looked and lived like all other human beings. He suffered from common physical limitations, such as hunger and tiredness. As with all other human beings, He experienced emotion, and He longed for human companionship and friendship. And ultimately, like every other human being, His life ended in death.[28] "It is apparent," writes Millard Erickson, "that for the disciples and the authors of the New Testament books, there was no question about Jesus's humanity."[29]

Ellen G. White concurs, "[Christ] took human nature. He became flesh even as we are. . . . While in this world, [He] lived a life of complete humanity."[30] Moreover, "Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity."[31] "Clad in the vestments of humanity," she further writes, "the Son of God came down to the level of those he wished to save. . . . He took upon him our sinful nature."[32] "Our Saviour," she often affirms, "took humanity, with all its liabilities."[33] Thus, the New Testament writers and Ellen G. White leave little doubt as to the full, or complete, humanity of Christ.

At this point, an important question arises: Why did God choose to become human? The New Testament writers provide a plethora of answers, only a few of which can be mentioned here. First, Christ became human to give evidence of God's initiative in the process of salvation. By becoming human, God showed His commitment to restoring the broken relationship between Himself and humanity (1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8). Through the process of the Incarnation, God bridged the chasm created by sin, thus reuniting humanity to

Himself and providing the possibility of eternal life for humanity.

Second, through the person of Christ, humanity was given the opportunity of truly knowing God. As a result of sin, God's nature had gradually become obfuscated, and humanity had lost a true understanding of who God is. Thus, Christ came to reveal God. "Anyone who has seen me," Jesus said, "has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus, the New Testament authors argued, was the express image of the Father (2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:3).

Third, Jesus came to die for humanity. In the person of Christ, God made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of humanity. The authors of the New Testament clearly understood that, in order for His sacrifice to have full efficacy, God willingly humbled Himself and became human: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death.... For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:14–17). Accordingly, if Jesus had not become human, the efficacy of His sacrifice would be in question.

Fourth, Jesus came to identify with fallen humanity and to provide an example of holy living. To a careful examination of this last point we now turn.

The identification of Christ with the suffering of humanity

While the primary purpose of Christ's incarnation was to reconcile humanity with God through His death,[34] the New Testament also teaches that He came to identify with fallen humanity and to provide comfort for those who struggle with sin. As evidenced previously, Christ embraced humanity thoroughly and completely. Apart from enabling Him to provide atonement for humanity, His identification with humanity allowed the triune God to take up "our infirmities" and carry "our diseases" (Matthew 8:17). As a result, Christ is able to perfectly sympathize with the struggles of "estranged and dysfunctional humanity."[35] Hebrews 4:15 is the locus classicus that expresses this thought: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses." Because Jesus came to us as fully human, He knows what it means to live in a world full of sin and fear, wickedness and destruction; to be lonely and homeless, hungry and thirsty; and to be accused and rejected. When He stoops down to us, He does so as the God who has endured human suffering.

Christ's identification with humanity also means that He "has been tempted in every way, just as we are" (verse 15). Ellen G. White suggests that Jesus' experience of all that humanity endures was necessary for two reasons: first, "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";[36] and second, because He suffered in His temptations, He is now "able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). Thus, while "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.... This is not true.... Christ knows the sinner's trials; He knows his temptations. He took upon Himself our nature; He was tempted in all points like as we are. He has wept, He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."[37] Thus, Christ became a "sharer in all the experiences of humanity, He could feel not only for, but with, every burdened and tempted and struggling one."[38] This knowledge—that Christ suffered temptation like every human being—should be a source of great comfort for all those who struggle with sin.[39]

Furthermore, not only was Jesus "tempted in every way, just as we are" (Hebrews 4:15), Ellen G. White suggests that no other human being has ever been "so fiercely beset by temptation; never another bore so heavy a burden of the world's sin and pain."[40] "Never will man be tried with temptations as powerful as those which assailed Christ."[41] "Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befall human beings."[42] White attributes the greater intensity of Christ's temptations to the fact that His nature was "more exalted, and pure, and holy"[43] than that of other human beings. Thus, "the temptations that Christ withstood were as much stronger than ours as his nobility and majesty are greater than ours."[44] As a result of His suffering, however, "never was there another whose sympathies were so broad or so tender."[45] Moreover, Christ's sympathy for humanity is accompanied by an assurance: due to His identification with and thus understanding of humanity, He can help us overcome temptation. White writes, "He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal."[46] Because Christ identified with and thus understands the human condition, we can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). As Louis Berkhof states, "Only such a truly human Mediator, who had experiential knowledge of the woes of mankind and rose superior to all temptations, could enter sympathetically into all the experiences, the trials, and the temptations of man and be a perfect human example for His followers."[47]

Christ as a perfect human example

Identifying with fallen humanity while being without sin (Hebrews 4:15) allowed Jesus Christ to be a perfect example for humans in all areas of life. Beginning with Paul, Christian writers of all persuasions have always affirmed Jesus Christ to be the supreme pattern for moral and ethical behavior. Multitudes of volumes published throughout the centuries exhort Christians to look to Christ alone as the ultimate exemplar of the Christian life.[48]

The theme of "Christ as an example" is extraordinarily vast in the New Testament, as well as in the writings of Ellen G. White.[49] It is, thus, impossible in this short chapter to comprehensively explore the profound depth and richness of this theme as presented in these writings.[50] Thus, this paper will briefly examine just a few areas in which the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White view Christ as the ultimate

exemplar for fallen humanity.

First and foremost, Jesus is the quintessential exemplar of the perfect fulfillment of the two great commandments: to love God and one's neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39). The mutual agape love between the Father and the Son serves as an example of the love that Christians should exhibit toward one another.[51] "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). In Ephesians 5:2, Paul appealed to his readers to "walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us." Similarly, Ellen G. White frequently affirms that "Christ has given us an example of love . . . , and has enjoined upon his followers to love one another as he has loved us";[52] that "he presented to the world a new phase of greatness in his exhibition of mercy, compassion, and love";[53] and that "Christ is . . . [our] pattern." "[He] has given us an example of pure, disinterested love."[54]

Christ's perfect fulfillment of the two great commandments resulted in genuine obedience in all areas of His life. Jesus is, thus, the ultimate exemplar of obedience to the commandments of God. "The life of Christ is a perfect fulfillment of every precept of this law. . . . His life is our standard of obedience and service."[55] "Christ came to magnify the law and make it honorable. He showed that it is based upon the broad foundation of love to God and love to man, and that obedience to its precepts comprises the whole duty of man. In His own life He gave an example of obedience to the law of God."[56] "And since the law of God is 'holy, and just, and good,' a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character."[57] It is because of His character that Christ could give us "the example of sinless life."[58]

In addition to this image of Christ as the supreme example of obedience, the New Testament also portrays Christ as an example of self-denial, suffering, and self-sacrifice on behalf of others. "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24, ESV; see also Mark 8:34; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 2:5, 8). Similarly, Ellen G. White writes that Christ taught His disciples "self-sacrifice for the good of others. . . . The true disciple of Christ will follow His example."[59] "Daily we need the fresh revealing of His presence. We need to follow more closely His example of self-renunciation and self-sacrifice."[60] "Christ is the example of every believer. While in the heavenly courts, he chose to lay aside his royal robe and his kingly crown, and come to this earth as one among men, to live a life of poverty and self-denial."[61]

The inspired writers also present Christ as a divine pattern in resistance to temptations. "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). Similarly, Ellen G. White notes that while Christ's nature was "holy and pure," He was still tempted "in all points as we are." But, as noted above, because "his nobility and majesty are greater than ours," His temptations were also much stronger in magnitude than those experienced by any human being.[62] While the "strength and power" of Christ's temptations will never be experienced by human beings, "it is the privilege of men and women to gain the victory over temptation through the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour, who is familiar with every trial of humanity."[63] Because of His victory over temptations, "*He has left us a bright example*, that we should follow His steps."[64]

Christ is also an exemplar of humility (see, e.g., Matthew 11:29; John 13:13–15). Paul thus implores the believers in Philippi:

> Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
>
> Who, being in very nature God,
> did not consider equality with God
> something to be used to his
> own advantage,
> rather, he made himself nothing,
> by taking the very nature of a servant [slave] (Philippians 2:5–7).

Commenting on this passage, Ellen G. White writes, "God permits every human being to exercise his individuality. He desires no one to submerge his mind in the mind of a fellow mortal. Those who desire to be transformed in mind and character are not to look to men, but to the divine Example."[65] Christ's example of humility, so magnificently expressed by Paul in this passage, also forms the foundation for another way in which Christ serves as an example to fallen humanity, namely, as an example of leadership.

Philippians 2:5–7 clearly echoes Jesus' conversation with His disciples when they jostled to secure higher positions in His kingdom. In Mark 10:43–45, Jesus unequivocally pointed to Himself as an example of godly leadership: "Not so with you. Instead, . . . whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Referring to these passages, Ellen G. White writes,

> It is time now for men to humble their hearts before God and to learn to work in His ways. Let those who have sought to rule their fellow workers study to know what manner of spirit they are of. They should seek the Lord by fasting and prayer, and in humility of soul.
>
> *Christ in His earthly life gave an example that all can safely follow.* He appreciates His flock, and He wants no power set over them that will restrict their freedom in His service. He has never placed man as a ruler over His heritage. True Bible religion will lead to self-control, not to control of one another. As a people we need a larger measure of the Holy Spirit, that we may bear the solemn message that God has given us, without exaltation.[66]

Christ also is the exemplar of "faith and firm trust in God"[67] and of how to relate to others,[68] to exercise mercy,[69] to pray,[70] and to exemplify Him in preaching and teaching as well as in medical and missionary ministry.[71] Christ, thus, serves as the supreme exemplar in a multitude of ways. Both the New Testament writers and Ellen G. White appear to be deeply convicted that, through His example, Jesus provided

fallen humanity with all it needs to live godly and fulfilling lives. Ellen G. White concludes, "To save the transgressor of God's law, Christ, the one equal with the Father, came to live heaven before men, that they might learn to know what it is to have heaven in the heart. He illustrated that man must be to be worthy of the precious boon of the life that measures with the life of God."[72]

Thus, it becomes clear that following the example of Christ is not optional for the believer. Only through "fixing our eyes on Jesus" and following His example can Christians experience the abundant life promised by Christ (Hebrews 12:2; John 10:10). It must be noted, however, that while all Christians are beseeched by inspired writers to follow the example of Christ, *following His example is not the means of salvation.* A desire to follow the example of Christ results as a believer understands what Christ accomplished for him or her on the cross. True holiness and obedience always come as a result of hearing, understanding, and accepting by faith the gospel of Jesus Christ. While Christ's life of love, humility, self-sacrifice, and obedience might be attractive to believers and nonbelievers,[73] it is not His example that should primarily attract us to Him but rather the ultimate manifestation of His love on the cross. A true Christian life of humility, obedience, and self-sacrifice is the outcome of accepting Christ as our Substitute. As Ellen G. White affirms, "A work is to be accomplished . . . similar to that which took place at the outpouring of the holy Spirit in the days of the early disciples, when they preached Jesus and him crucified. Many will be converted in a day; for the message will go with power."[74] And again, "the theme that attracts the heart of the sinner is Christ, and him crucified. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus stands revealed to the world in unparalleled love. Present him thus to the hungering multitudes, and the light of his love will win men from darkness to light, from transgression to obedience and true holiness. Beholding Jesus upon the cross of Calvary arouses the conscience to the heinous character of sin as nothing else can do."[75]

Although no believer in Christ has ever denied that Jesus is the supreme exemplar of ethical and moral behavior, a question has at times been raised regarding the nature of His humanity. Was Jesus' humanity *exactly like ours*? In other words, was His humanity as fallen as ours? And if not, can He be our example?

Was Christ exactly like us?

Throughout Christian history, few thinkers discussed the precise nature of Christ's humanity. The fourth-century theologian Gregory of Nazianzus was one of the first theologians to explore this issue, asserting: "For that which He has not assumed He has not healed."[76] Gregory's assumption was that unless Jesus was exactly like us, the healing of human nature would not have been possible. This position went hand in hand with Gregory's belief that God does not judge newborn infants because there is nothing evil in them at birth.[77] Salvation, thus, consisted primarily in bringing "humans to the same status as the humanity of Jesus Christ";[78] a process labeled by ancient Christians as *theosis*, or "divinization" (also

"deification").[79] In later centuries, the view that Christ's human nature was exactly like ours occasionally surfaced within both Catholic and Protestant theology.[80] Nineteenth-century Scottish theologian Edward Irving (1792–1834) became the most vocal proponent of the view that the humanity of Christ was exactly like that of Adam after the Fall.[81] During the latter part of the nineteenth century, a blend of both Gregory's and Irving's positions was adopted by some within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and continues to be held in some Adventist circles today.[82]

So was Jesus exactly like us? Was His human nature like that of every child born after the Fall? It would be highly desirable to obtain clear, unambiguous answers from the inspired writings; however, neither the New Testament nor Ellen G. White provide unequivocal answers to these questions. As evidenced above, both the New Testament and Ellen G. White affirm the full, complete humanity of Christ; however, it must be acknowledged that Ellen G. White also made many statements regarding the "fallen" nature of Christ, the following being but examples: "It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man";[83] "sinless and exalted by nature, the Son of God consented to take the habiliments of humanity, to become one with the fallen race";[84] "clad in the vestments of humanity, the Son of God came down to the level of those he wished to save. . . . He took upon him our sinful nature."[85] Such statements lead some to conclude that it is seemingly incontrovertible that Jesus' human nature was exactly like that of every child of Adam since the Fall.

On the other hand, it must also be acknowledged that both the New Testament and Ellen G. White indicate that Christ's humanity was *not* the same as ours. Of Christ, it is said that, while yet in the womb, He was a "holy thing" (Luke 1:35, KJV) and that He never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21). Of us, it is said that we are "shapen in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5, KJV) and that "from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward" (Psalm 58:3). While Paul affirmed Christ's full humanity (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:5; 3:16), he nevertheless asserted that Christ had come "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3, KJV; emphasis added) or "in the *likeness* of men" (Philippians 2:7, KJV; emphasis added).[86] Why such ambivalence? Could not Paul have written "in sinful flesh" or "born like all men" and thus avoided ambiguity? According to Thomas Schreiner, Paul's use of this word *likeness* "stresses the identity between Jesus and sinful flesh, yet at the same time it also suggests that he is unique."[87] Raoul Dederen also arrives at a similar conclusion:

> Part of Christ's mission was to be truly human. He possessed the essential characteristics of human nature. He was "flesh and blood" (Heb. 2:14), and in all things like His fellow human beings (verse 17). His humanity did not correspond to Adam's humanity before the Fall, nor in every respect to Adam's humanity after the Fall, for the Scriptures portray Christ's humanity as sinless. . . . He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:23). He took human nature in its fallen condition with its infirmities

> and liabilities and bearing the consequences of sin; but not its sinfulness. He was truly human, one with the human race, except for sin.[88]

The New Testament, thus, testifies to the uniqueness of Christ's humanity. What about Ellen G. White? While it must be acknowledged that many of her statements, in isolation from the totality of her writing, could be understood to mean that Jesus was born "exactly like us," she also makes statements that suggest otherwise: "[Christ is] a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions."[89]

> It is not correct to say, as many writers have said, that Christ was like all children. . . .
>
> . . . He was God in human flesh. When urged by his companions to do wrong, divinity flashed through humanity, and he refused decidedly.[90]

No other child experienced this because no other child was both divine and human. "He had not taken on Him even the nature of the angels, but humanity, perfectly identical with our own nature, except the taint of sin."[91] Given that all human beings are children of Adam, could one ever argue that all infants are born without "the taint of sin"? "His finite nature was pure and spotless."[92] "His nature was more exalted, and pure, and holy than that of the sinful race for whom he suffered."[93] "His character is superior to ours."[94] "His nobility and majesty are greater than ours."[95] "Jesus was holy and pure."[96]

Except for Christ, has there ever been an infant born on earth who could be described in such words? What would the response be if the parents of a newborn announced to their family and friends that their child's character was purer, holier, and superior to all other newborns? All parents are keenly aware of their children's capacity for sinfulness from a young age. Ellen G. White is aware of this reality when she states that the result of "eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist."[97] Could it be said of Christ that He had "a bent to evil"?[98] Is this what Ellen G. White means when she writes that Christ took upon Himself "the form and nature of fallen man"?[99] While statements like these may lead some to argue that Jesus' human nature was exactly like ours, Ellen G. White herself sheds light on the way she uses the phrase "fallen nature" with reference to Christ: "Christ took our nature, *fallen* but not corrupted."[100] As if this were not enough to settle the matter, in a letter to a Brother Baker she warns him:

> 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. . . .
>
> . . . 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.[101]

These and other similar statements are evidence that an insistence that Christ's human nature was exactly the same as ours is unsustainable.

Some theological implications

It is one thing to insist that Jesus' human nature was exactly like ours. It is quite another when the question is reversed: Is our human nature exactly the same as that of Jesus? If we insist that Jesus' human nature was exactly like ours, then logically it seems that we would have to agree that our human nature is exactly the same as His. To unpack the theological implications of such a position, let me pose two further questions: (1) Do newborn infants need a Savior? (2) Did Jesus need a Savior when He was born? An affirmative answer to both of these questions leads to the absurd proposal that, just like every human baby, Jesus needed a Savior when He was born. This was, in fact, the position of Edward Irving, who suggested that one of the reasons that Jesus died on the cross was to redeem His own sinful nature.[102] Such a position cannot be sustained biblically.

The position that Jesus' human nature was identical to ours means that our human nature must be exactly like His. And this position requires a negative response to both of my additional questions. Jesus, being the "holy thing" and having a nature that was "not corrupted" by sin[103] clearly did not need a Savior when He was born. In fact, due to the circumstances of His birth and sinless life, He *never* needed a Savior. But if Jesus' human nature was exactly the same as ours, then the logical conclusion is that human newborns also do not need a Savior, because our natures, like His, would be "fallen but not corrupted."[104] According to this position, we are not born sinners and begin to need a Savior only when we begin to sin. The ultimate conclusion of this position is that if we are not born sinners and, like Jesus, do not need a Savior when we are born, it is possible to become exactly like Him at some point in life, that is, to become sinlessly perfect. Upon reaching a sinless state, one would need Jesus only as a Sustainer and a Helper rather than as a Savior, relegating Christ's saving activity to the past and therefore denying Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, for a sinless person no longer needs Christ's high-priestly mediation. Thus, the argument that Jesus' nature was exactly like ours leads to the conclusion that before Jesus returns to earth, it is possible for us to achieve a pre-Fall state of humanity, except for physical infirmities.

Accordingly, it should be evident that the only way to answer our earlier questions—Do newborn infants need a Savior? Did Jesus need a Savior when He was born?—is in the affirmative to the first question and in the negative to the second. Thus, the question of whether Jesus' nature was exactly like ours must be answered both Yes and No. Jesus Christ was unique! "It is not correct to say," Ellen G. White emphatically states "that Christ was like all children."[105] According to Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White, Christ was fully divine and fully human, and this is where the discussion must end. Parsing Jesus' nature beyond this simple affirmation is counterproductive because it may lead to significant theological aberrations that can negatively affect the spiritual lives of believers.

Did Jesus' human nature really need to be exactly like ours?

Finally, and in conclusion, we need to address the twin questions, Did Jesus' human nature really need to be exactly like ours for Him to function as our example? If not, did He have an advantage over us? The answer to first question is No. Jesus did not need to be exactly like us to function as our example. As evidenced previously, during Old Testament times, God functioned as the supreme exemplar of morals and ethics for Israel. No human being was ever asked to assume such a function. Thus, the people of Israel did not have a human exemplar, and yet God invoked them to follow His example of love, justice, and mercy in their daily lives. They were also to live by faith that one day the divine Messiah would perfectly fulfill the law of God's love (Isaiah 9:6, 7; 61:1, 2). Through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God in human form, this promise was fulfilled. He did not, however, need to be exactly like us, burdened with inherited inclinations to sin. It was enough for Him to become *fully* human to fulfill the purpose of His coming, that is, to redeem humanity and "to enable men to become sons of God."[106] As Ellen G. White writes, "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His."[107] It was Jesus' identification with the human race and His intimate familiarity with the hardships of the human experience that qualified him to be our exemplar. As Ellen G. White writes, "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.' "[108]

If Christ's human nature was not exactly like ours, did He have an advantage over us? While purity of nature could certainly be considered as an advantage it must be recognized that because there was not a "taint of sin" in His nature,[109] and because His nature was "more exalted, and pure, and holy than that of the sinful race,"[110] Christ suffered far more than we will ever suffer. The inherent sinfulness of our natures desensitizes us to sin and suffering, and unless it touches us personally, we often react with a degree of indifference to human misery and wretchedness. We take note that two hundred people were killed in an explosion at a market in Baghdad or that five hundred immigrants lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean, but then we move on and read the latest election story. Jesus was not like that. Ellen G. White writes that He was "free from every taint of selfishness,"[111] and therefore, "He 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. He was the majesty of heaven; he was equal with the Father."[112] None of us will ever suffer in the face of sin and temptation as Jesus did.

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis addresses the argument that Christ's uniqueness gave Him an advantage over other humans. Some believe, he wrote, that His sufferings and death lose value because "it must have been so easy for him." Lewis responded, "If I am drowning in a rapid river, a man who still has one foot on the bank may give me a hand which saves my life. Ought I to shout back (between my gasps) 'No, it's not fair! You have an advantage! You're keeping one foot on the bank'? That advantage—call it 'unfair' if you like—is the only reason why he can be of any use to me. To what will you look for help if you will not look to that which is stronger than yourself?"[113] In this view, Christ's advantage affords salvation to humanity.

It is a unique privilege of the Christian to possess the revelation of God through the Holy Scriptures, which give witness to God's effort to save fallen humanity through the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is a further privilege that, through His actions, as revealed in both the Old Testament and the life of Jesus Christ, God showed us His true character and called us to follow His example: "Be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

Endnotes

1. Except where noted otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from the NIV.
2. Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Arlington Heights, IL: Christian Liberty Press, 2003), 86, 87.
3. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 73.
4. Ibid., 73.
5. John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 342.
6. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1953), 978.
7. In Luke 1:49, Mary refers to God as One whose name is holy; similarly, in 1 Peter 1:15 and Revelation 4:8, we find echoes of the Old Testament proclamation of God's holiness. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 341.
8. Derek Tidball, *The Message of Holiness: Restoring God's Masterpiece* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 110 (emphasis in original).
9. Ronald E. Heine, "God Has Spoken in His Son—the Life of Jesus," in *Christian Doctrine: "The Faith . . . Once Delivered,"* ed. William J. Richardson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1983), 154.
10. Several verses later (Luke 1:49), the same designation, *hagion*, is ascribed to God: "holy is his name."
11. In an attempt to explain Jesus' separateness from the rest of humanity, postapostolic Christianity attempted to answer this question of "how" by developing the teaching that Mary herself was "separate" from the rest of humanity and not touched by sin in any way. Thus, her intrinsic "holiness," which resulted in her "sinless nature," was passed on to Jesus. In 1854, this ultimately resulted in the Roman Catholic dogma of the immaculate conception. There is no support in the New Testament for such a teaching. For a balanced discussion on the theological meaning of the virgin birth, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 688–691.
12. Tidball, *Message of Holiness*, 111.
13. These passages may be interpreted as referring either to God the Father and Jesus or to Jesus alone. The majority of commentaries I consulted choose the latter position due to grammatical considerations.
14. For a broader study on the full, coequal, and coeternal divinity of Christ as presented in the New Testament, see Gerhard Pfandl, "The Trinity in Scripture," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 80–94.
15. Ellen G. White, "Christ Our Complete Salvation," *Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895, 8 (emphasis added.) Similarly, in "Ask, and It Shall Be Given You," Ellen G. White refers to Christ as "equal with the Father,

Himself all-sufficient, the storehouse of all blessings." *Signs of the Times*, September 5, 1900, 2 (562).

16. Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), 1:352. In many of her statements, Ellen G. White affirms the coequal authority of Jesus with the Father. See, e.g., Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1940), 226; *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), 179; "Ask, and It Shall Be Given You," 2 (562); *Selected Messages*, bk. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1958), 371.

17. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1989), 24.

18. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1952), 287.

19. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 23.

20. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1958), 366.

21. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 24. For a collection of Ellen G. White's statements on the preexistence and full divinity of Christ, see also "Statements on Preexistence of Christ: From the Spirit of Prophecy," *Ministry*, May 1945, 14, 18.

22. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 530.

23. Pfandl, "Trinity in Scripture," 88.

24. Raoul Dederen, "Christ: His Person and Work," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2000), 162.

25. Docetic teachers could not bring themselves to accept that God could become truly man. Instead, they believed that He only *appeared* as a human being. Apollinarians, on the other hand, taught that Jesus' human mind was replaced by the divine mind, which animated His human body. This amounted to the belief that Jesus was not an ordinary human being but rather an odd hybrid of divinity and humanity. Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 366, 372, 373.

26. Dederen, "Christ: His Person and Work," 162.

27. Ibid.

28. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 706–708; Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 358–363.

29. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 712.

30. Ellen G. White, "The Life and Light of Men," *Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1897, 5 (357).

31. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 49. Ellen G. White wrote many statements on the humanity of Christ. For a comprehensive collection of these statements, see Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on the Humanity of Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 1997), 105–149.

32. Ellen G. White, "The Word of God," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 22, 1907, 8.

33. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 117.

34. Ellen G. White, "Address to the Church," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 18, 1893, 241, 242.

35. Donald L. Alexander, *The Humanity of Christ and the Healing of the Dysfunction of the Human Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 95.

36. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 24.

37. Ellen G. White, " 'Tempted in All Points Like as We Are,' " *Bible Echo*, November 1, 1892, 322.

38. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1903), 78.

39. White, " 'Tempted in All Points,' " 322; cf. Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1955), 13.

40. White, *Education*, 78.

41. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 4:45; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 5:426.

42. White, *Education*, 78.

43. Ellen G. White, "The Work of the Minister," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 11, 1888, 578.

44. Ellen G. White, " 'In All Points Tempted Like as We Are,' " *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, August 26, 1903, 413 (1).

45. White, *Education*, 78.

46. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 329.

47. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 319.

48. One prominent example includes Thomas à Kempis's *De Imitatione Christi* (*The Imitation of Christ*). This book was so influential in the thinking of John Wesley that he translated and republished the book under the title *The Christian's Pattern* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954). *The Imitation of Christ* was also a part of Ellen G. White's personal library. It was referred to positively by E. J. Waggoner in "Humility Wanted," *Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1887, 368, and extracts from the book were published in "Extracts From Thomas a'Kempis," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 11, 1855, 83. Quotes from Thomas à Kempis graced the pages of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* on numerous occasions.

49. Two Protestant movements, seventeenth-century German Pietism and eighteenth-century Methodism, became particularly concerned with the importance of following the example of Christ. The *raison d'être* for these movements' existence was their attempt to revive the spiritually stale state of post-Reformation Protestantism. Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 473–475, 489, 490, 510–516. It is not surprising, therefore, that the writings of Ellen G. White, who was familiar with Pietism and intimately connected with Methodism, are permeated with the theme of Christian holiness. True holiness, she is convinced, was something that could be accomplished only by following the example of Christ. Thus, in her writings, one finds literally thousands of references that encourage, exhort, and beseech her readers to fix their eyes on Jesus and to daily walk in His footsteps. In this, she is no different from the New Testament writers, who experienced Jesus' presence in their lives firsthand.

50. A search of Ellen G. White's writings for the words *Christ* and *example* in the same sentence or paragraph revealed more than four thousand entries. The number of references escalates dramatically when one includes words such as *pattern* or *imitation*. Considering the relative ease of access to these writings through electronic means, readers are encouraged to explore this theme in their own time.

51. See, e.g., John 14:31; 15:9; 17:23; Ephesians 5:1, 2; cf. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 282.

52. Ellen G. White, "Christ Man's Example," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1887, 417; cf. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:222, 223.

53. Ellen G. White, "No Caste in Christ," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 22, 1891, 785.

54. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 2:169.

55. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 8:312.

56. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1911), 505.

57. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1911), 469.

58. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 49.

59. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 142, 143; cf. 199.

60. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1942), 457.

61. Ellen G. White, "In Humility of Heart," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, April 6, 1910, 1; cf. 1 John 3:16.

62. White, " 'In All Points Tempted Like as We Are,' " 1.

63. Ibid.

64. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:426 (emphasis added).

65. Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), 2:428; cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 3:371; White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:253.

66. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 9:275, 276 (emphasis added).

67. Ellen G. White, *Confrontation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1970), 49.

68. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), 504.

69. White, "No Caste in Christ," 785.

70. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:203; cf. White, "Ask, and It Shall Be Given You," 2 (562).

71. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1954), 66; Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1963), 20, 70; White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:385; Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1974), 441. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1945), 3:123, 124.

72. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 179.

73. Consider, e.g., Gandhi's famous statement addressed to Christians: "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." Gandhi, quoted in Bill Wilson, *Christianity in the Crosshairs* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2004), 74.

74. Ellen G. White, "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days (Concluded.)," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 29, 1892, 738.

75. Ellen G. White, "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 22, 1892, 723.

76. Gregory Nazianzen, "To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

77. Gregory Nazianzen, "Oration on Holy Baptism,"

in Schaff, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, 40.23, 367; cf. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 345. Gregory was a theological heir of Origen. Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 100.

78. Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 189. Olson argues that for Gregory, "[Christ's] humanity . . . is the very same humanity that Adam had and that bore the image of God and was destined to share in God's glory in a creaturely way. Christ restored that lost potential, and that is what Scripture means when it describes him as the 'first born among many brothers' and our example." Ibid.

79. By embracing *theosis* as the mode of salvation, Gregory and thinkers like him did not mean to imply that the boundary between the Creator and creature would ever be crossed. They simply meant that believers could become like Christ in His humanity when He was here on earth. For an excellent work on *theosis* in early Christianity, see Vladimir Kharlamov, *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2012).

80. Spanish Adoptionists of the eighth and ninth century, e.g., were greatly concerned with the "completeness of our Lord's humanity," ultimately equating His nature with that of humans after the Fall. Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ in Its Physical, Ethical, and Official Aspects* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 248, 249; cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 52–54. Seventeenth-century mystic Antoinette Bourignon (1616–1680) also advocated this view of Christ's humanity. Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Savior* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1962), 179. The list goes on and includes thinkers such as Pierre Poiret (1646–1719), Johann Conrad Dippel (1673–1734), and Gottfried Menken (1768–1831).

81. For a comprehensive exposition of Irving's views, see Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 252–256. It must also be noted that prominent twentieth-century theologian Karl Barth also enthusiastically embraces the view of a "post-Fall" or "sinful" nature of Christ. He writes, "There must be no weakening or obscuring of the saving truth that the nature which God assumed in Christ is identical with our own nature. . . . If it were otherwise, how could Christ be really like us? We stand before God characterized by the Fall." *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, pt. 2 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 153.

82. For a comparison of Irving's views on the human nature of Christ and those of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, see Remwil R. Tornalejo, "A Comparative Study of the Christology of Edward Irving, Ellet Joseph Waggoner, and Alonzo Trevier Jones" (master's thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2009).

83. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1945), 4:115.

84. Ellen G. White, "The Plan of Salvation," *Signs of the Times,* February 20, 1893, 247.

85. Ellen G. White, "The Word of God," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 22, 1907, 8.

86. Ellen G. White, "The Work of the Minister," 578. In this article, Ellen G. White uses the KJV phrase "in fashion as a man."

87. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 403.

88. Dederen, "Christ: His Person and Work," 164, 165.

89. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:202. For further explanation, see endnote 100.

90. Ellen G. White, "And the Grace of God Was Upon Him," *Youth's Instructor*, September 8, 1898, 704, 705.

91. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript* Releases, vol. 16 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 182.

92. Ibid.

93. White, "The Work of the Minister," 578.

94. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 116.

95. White, " 'In All Points Tempted Like as We Are,' " 1.

96. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:426.

97. White, *Education*, 29.

98. Scripture clearly testifies that there was no hint of sin in Christ. Paul thus wrote "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21); John emphatically agreed: "And in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

99. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:115.

100. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:182 (emphasis in original). For an insightful study of Ellen G. White's use of the phrase "sinful nature," see Tim Poirier, "Sources Clarify Ellen White's Christology," *Ministry*, December 1989, 7–9. In his article, Poirier shows that White, in her writings, utilized a useful distinction between "innocent infirmities" and "sinful propensities," which she gleaned from the works of Henry Melvill (one of White's favorite authors) and Octavius Winslow. Accordingly, Adam before the Fall was free from innocent infirmities and sinful propensities. In contrast, humanity after the Fall is burdened with both. During His incarnation, Christ accepted innocent infirmities but not sinful propensities. He thus possessed "sinful nature" but not exactly the same as ours. Cf. Henry Melvill, *Sermons* (New York: Swords, Stanford, & Co., 1838), 76–97; Octavius Winslow, *The Glory of the Redeemer in His Person and Work* (London: John F. Shaw, 1845), 124–183.

101. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 18, 19.

102. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 253.

103. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:182.

104. Ibid.

105. White, "And the Grace of God Was Upon Him," 704, 705.

106. C. S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 50.

107. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 25.

108. Ibid., 24.

109. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, 253.

110. White, "The Work of the Minister," 578.

111. Ellen G. White, "Obedience the Path to Life," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 28, 1893, 193.

112. White, "The Work of the Minister," 578.

113. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Collier Books, 1960), 46.