What Human Nature Did Jesus Take? Fallen

What backgrounds do the early church councils provide for our current debate on the nature of Christ? What do the key New Testament passages indicate about the kind of human nature He took? Why did He take human nature, and what does this reveal about the kind He took? by Kenneth Gage

In the early Christian centuries, thinkers generally agreed that Jesus had a preexistent life as God and lived a sinless life as man. But differences of opinion arose when certain Church Fathers (mostly the Alexandrian school) tended to emphasize Christ's divinity at the expense of His full humanity.[1] Equally earnest theologians (the Antiochene school) stressed His full humanity, fearing that the Alexandrians were doing great damage to the meaning of Christ's role as man's Saviour.[2] In their counterresponses, these two schools of theological thought tended to overemphasize their positions.

As years went by, the Alexandrian emphasis became the prevailing teaching of the Roman Catholic Church,[3] primarily through the overpowering influence of Augustine's theology—a theological system that generally rested on Neoplatonic presuppositions.[4] The Jesus of the Middle Ages, immaculately conceived and barely touched by the troubles of humanity, was the logical result of Alexandrian-Augustinian theology. Until recent times this Alexandrian emphasis also dominated Protestant Christology.

Chalcedon, an early church council (A.D. 451), decreed that Jesus was *vere Deus* and *vere homo*—"truly God" and "truly man." But the church councils did not fully answer basic questions about Christ's nature. Ever since, people have attempted to supply the answer, the results depending upon their philosophical presuppositions. Without some higher point of view, some transcending Biblical principle or later prophetic authority, the decision of the councils appear open to several interpretations, depending upon which side of the Chalcedonian formula seems to be underemphasized at the moment.

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*All Scripture quotations in this article, unless otherwise marked, are from the Revised Standard Version.

Unfortunately this formula placed two apparently irreconcilable contradictions side by side without defining how they could exist in a baby born of an earthly parent. Since Chalcedon we have learned (1) that both truths must be stressed with equal emphasis and (2) that nothing is gained by merely settling for a mutually exclusive contradiction. If either emphasis is qualified by philosophical presuppositions, the central truth of Christianity is distorted, if not destroyed. And in the process most other fundamental Christian doctrines are severely warped.

But what more could have been done at Chalcedon? The Chalcedonians were at the limit of human understanding when they tried to fathom *how* the nature of God merged with the nature of man. And once we begin asking *how,* we merely revive fruitless, ageless controversies. And we end up either with liberal Ebionitism, which refused to accept our Lord's divinity as *vere Deus,* or with unconscious Docetism (so-called orthodoxy), which refused to accept His humanity as *vere homo* in the fullest sense.

When we focus first or only on the abstractions of the two natures and on what appear to be logical impossibilities, every "solution" arouses someone else's difficulty. Therefore it is surely not soteriologically helpful or appropriate to conclude that the core event of Christianity can tell us nothing more than that we face a divine paradox. We must move beyond the wrong question.

The Primary Issue

The salvation issue is not primarily *how* God became man, but *why.* Whenever we try to answer the first question without first asking the second, we unconsciously (1) are driven by our own presuppositions (such as our thoughts regarding the nature of sin) or (2) fall into Greek categories of thought (that is, trying to define such concepts and words as *hypostasis, anhypostasia, ousia,* and

prosōpon), (3) tread in areas for which there is no divine revelation, and thus simply (4) relive all the futile controversies that have divided the church for centuries.

Without question, mystery envelops the Incarnation. But the mystery is regarding *how* God and man were blended, not *why.* A perceptive writer observed: "There is no one who can explain the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. Yet we know that He came to this earth and lived as a man among men. The man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty, yet Christ and the Father are one."[5]

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study."[6]

Why have many who claim orthodoxy resisted the full implications of "truly man"? Psychologically, all of us feel the need to put distance between Jesus and ourselves. We know who we are. We know our thoughts and our failures. So we find it very difficult to accept the thought that Jesus possessed the same flesh and blood, the same genes affected by the same law of heredity, that have affected the rest of us. Some, trying to appear faithful to Biblical terms, have gone so far as to suggest that He "vicariously"[7] took weakened human flesh. That Jesus started life carrying the weaknesses of His human ancestors strikes many as something improper , even as being blasphemous.

Theologically we state the resistance in other ways. We ask, How could Jesus be sinless without being separated from the infected stream of genes and chromosomes shared by the rest of the children of Adam? Or we affirm "that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if He had, He would have fallen under similar temptations."[8] As John Knox put it: "How could Christ have saved us if He were not a human being like ourselves? How could a human being like ourselves have saved us?"[9]

The issue seems stalemated until we ask *why* He came the way He did. If we do not face this question correctly, every other Biblical theme seems to become distorted.

We assume that Jesus' true humanity neither diminishes His divinity nor implies that He would have to be a sinner. And we further contend that to focus on Jesus as *very man* is not an exercise in peripherals or an act of spiritual arrogance. On the contrary, this emphasis may be the surest way to understand the simplicity of the plan of salvation.

Three groups exist among those who have no question about the deity of Jesus: (1) those who view Him as taking the nature of fallen man, as every child of Adam who has come into the world; (2) those who believe He took the nature of unfallen Adam and thus was exempt from certain liabilities all other children of Adam share at birth; and (3) those who consider these differences immaterial to the plan of salvation.

Each group arrives at its position on the nature of Jesus because of certain (perhaps unconscious) presuppositions. These determine their understanding of such categories as human depravity, atonement theory , and righteousness by faith. It seems to me that these theological concepts will remain relatively unclear until we understand *why* Jesus came to earth. Further, we will understand neither these nor the nature of Christ's humanity until we stand on the vantage point of the great controversy theme that permeates Scripture.[10]

Why did Jesus, like every baby two thousand years ago, take the condition of fallen mankind and not that of Adam "in his innocence in Eden"?[11] If Christ had taken the pre-Fall state, only a few of the issues in the great controversy would have been settled. He came: 1. To set forth clearly the character of God the Father (see John 14:9; Heb. 1:3).[12] 2. To silence Satan's falsehoods, such as that God did not have sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and self-sacrifice on man's behalf (see John 3:16). 3. To reveal Himself as man's substitute and surety, showing what justice and love meant as He conquered sin and suffered its consquences, as He paid the penalty that justice required (see Rom. 3:25, 26).[13] 4. To reveal Himself as man's example by providing fallen men and women with a model of obedience (1 Peter 2:21, 22). He thus gave them hope that the same power that enabled Him to resist sin was freely available so that those who sought it could also obey the laws of God (see 1 John 3:3; Rev. 3:21).[14] 5. To reveal Himself as man's teacher as He defined clearly the principles of God's government and the plan of redemption (see John 13:13).[15] 6. And to reveal Himself as man's high priest as He established His credibility and proved His ability to make overcomers out of men and women (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14-16).[16]

Scholars who agree

This understanding is far from unique. Many Biblical scholars have challenged the so-called orthodox view that Christ somehow took Adam's pre-Fall nature rather than the human equipment inherited by every other child of Adam. Among them are Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine, Herman Kohlbrugge, Eduard Bohl, Karl Barth, T. F. Torrance, Nels Ferre, C. E. B. Cranfield, Harold Roberts, Lesslie Newbigin, E. Stauffer, Anders Nygren, C. K. Barrett, and Eric Baker.[17]

Wolfhart Pannenberg wrote (1964): "The conception that at the Incarnation God did not assume human nature in its corrupt sinful state but only joined Himself with a humanity absolutely purified from all sin contradicts not only the anthropological radicality of sin, but also the testimony of the New Testament and of early Christian theology that the Son of God assumed sinful flesh and in sinful flesh itself overcame sin."[18]

None of these men believed that Christ sinned in either thought or act or that because He took fallen sinful flesh He needed a Saviour. Generally speaking, the term *sinful flesh* means the human condition in all of its aspects as affected by the fall of Adam and Eve. Such a nature is susceptible to temptation from within as from without. Contrary to the Grecian dualism that early pervaded much of orthodox Christianity, the flesh is not evil, nor does it sin of itself. Although the flesh is amoral, it does provide the equipment, the occasion, and the seat for sin if the human will is not constantly assisted by the Holy Spirit. But a person born with sinful flesh need not be a sinner.[19]

It has been frequently observed that the New Testament presents a very uncomplicated, straightforward understanding that Jesus was a man in every sense of the word.[20] True, New Testament writers remembered Him as possessing much more than human significance: They reverently referred to Him as God who became man. But their witness to Jesus does not suggest that they thought of Him as having physical, emotional, or moral advantages not available to His contemporaries.

At Pentecost, Peter simply called Him " 'Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst'" (Acts 2:22, N.K.J.V.). And Paul says Jesus Christ "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3, N.K.J.V.).

New Testament support

Nowhere in the New Testament do we get the slightest impression that Jesus visited earth in some kind of heavenly space suit that insulated Him from the risks inherent in a sin-permeated world. Let us examine some of the New Testament references to our Lord's humanity to see whether this observation can be supported.

A. *The virgin birth (Matt. 1:16, 18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 3:23).* The fact that one human parent was organically involved in the birth of Jesus is sufficient to indicate His indebtedness to human heredity. To suggest that He was born free from the liabilities of heredity is to go down the same road that Roman Catholicism started upon when it confused sin with physical substance. After this confusion, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception became a theological necessity. In turn, that doctrine led to the assumption that Christ took a pre-Fall human nature.

No Biblical evidence suggests that the stream of human heredity was broken between Mary and Jesus. The burden of proof lies with those who believe (1) that there was a physical break in the heredity stream between Mary and Jesus and (2) that because of some special insulation, He was "exempt" (a familiar word in Roman Catholic theology) from the full liability of fallen human nature.[21]

Some refer to Luke 1:35 as if that text conclusively indicates Christ had a pre-Fall nature. (See various English translations, such as the R.S.V.) But Luke is not discussing our Lord's human nature. He simply states that Christ's holy character would always distinguish Him as our sinless Saviour.

B. *The Son of man (Matt. 8:20; 24:27; et al.).* In this self-description, Jesus declared His identification and solidarity with mankind. The second Adam is not a special creation or a clone of the first—He is a hereditary descendant, born of a woman. Only by assuming the same fallen nature shared by those He came to save could He truly be the Son of man.

C. *The Adam/Christ analogy (Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15).* This first/second Adam analogy seems to be one of Paul's significant theological motifs. The analogy is often considered Paul's counterpart to our Lord's self-identification, Son of man. In brief, it seems to suggest most strongly the solidarity and identification of both Adam and Jesus with the human race. In Adam we have the

head of sinful humanity, and in Jesus, the head of the overcomers, humanity that conquers all temptations.[22]

Many consider Romans 5:12 as evidence that men and women are born sinners, but such is not Paul's argument. He is simply stating an obvious fact—the stream of death began with Adam. But Adam's descendants all die "*because all men sinned*."

All men and women are "in Adam" through natural birth, but only those who choose can be "in Christ," the second Adam. Our Lord has called everyone to be "in Christ," and only those who frustrate His call will be ultimately lost.

The assumption that Jesus took Adam's pre-Fall nature seems to destroy the force of Paul's parallel and his principle of solidarity. Paul's Adam-Christ analogy becomes relevant to mankind and to the great controversy only if Jesus incorporated Himself within fallen humanity—only if He met sin in the arena where all men are, "in Adam," and conquered every appeal to serve self, whether from within or without. Jesus intended that those in Him would be united corporately with the results of His saving work. But to accomplish this, He must first have been corporately connected with humanity in its fallen condition.[23]

D. *Paul's use of* sarx. Paul uses *sarx* ("flesh") in a variety of ways,[24] including (1) its ordinary meaning of flesh as a physical feature (1 Cor. 15:39; 2 Cor. 12:7; Col. 2:1); (2) in a metaphorical sense, as that which distinguishes man-kind from God (1 Cor. 15:50; cf. Eph. 6:12) or that which refers to human nature or earthly descent (Rom. 1:3; 4: 1; 8:3); and (3) as a synonym for *sin* (chaps. 6:19; 7:18; 8:4).

Paul flees from Hellenistic dualism and does not ascribe to *sarx* a substantive evil and sinfulness. Although *sarx* is morally neutral, Paul teaches that it does provide the seat and material in which evil may operate. It is the place where self-indulgence is expressed. Christians, though living in physical flesh (*sarx*), should no longer allow sin to rule their *sarx* (flesh); the Spirit provides power to the committed believer who chooses to control the desires that naturally arise in *sarx.* (See chap. 8:3-9.)

At times Paul uses *sarx* as a synonym for *sin*. And his doctrine of sin is as deep as his doctrine of creation is high. But he always keeps sin on the personal level, as a fractured personal relationship or an act of a responsible person (cf. James 4:17). The results of sin—fallen human nature—are given to all men and women at birth. But no one is held personally guilty or responsible for that fallen human condition (*sarx*).

E. *"The likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3).* Here we find Paul using words with great care. He states clearly the perfect sinlessness of Jesus. But he also emphasizes that our Lord overcame in the same sinful flesh (*sarx*) that since Adam all men and women have inherited. Paul's message: Jesus remained sinless in the arena where sin had conquered all other human beings. In so doing, He exposed the nature and vulnerability of sin.

Anders Nygren commented: "It was to be right in *sin's own realm* that the Son was to bring sin to judgment, overcome it, and take away its power. It is therefore important that with Christ it is actually a matter of 'sinful flesh,' of *sarx hamartias.*

"Christ's carnal nature was no unreality, but simple, tangible fact. He shared all our conditions. He was under the same powers of destruction. Out of 'the flesh' arose for Him the same temptations as for us. But in all this He was master of sin."[25]

Karl Barth adds that Christ's perfect obedience in our fallen nature means that "the commission of sin as such is not an attribute of true human existence as such, whether from the standpoint of its creation by God or from that of the fact that it is flesh on account of the Fall."[26]

"In every respect" (Heb. 2:17) He was "in the likeness of sinful flesh"—except that He did not sin. What better way could sin be condemned? How much clearer could Paul have said that possessing "sinful flesh" does not necessarily make a person a sinner? Jesus beat back Satan in sin-entrenched territory, Satan's home field. Never again need anyone, anywhere in the universe, doubt the fairness of God's laws or the adequacy of enabling grace and obedient faith.

Perhaps C. E. B. Cranfield, professor of theology at the University of Durham, has said it best. After taking into view all the possible interpretations of Romans 8:1-4, he wrote:

"By *sarx hamartias* Paul clearly meant 'sinful flesh,' i. e. , fallen human nature. But why did he say *en homoiōmati sarkos hamartias* ["in the likeness of sinful flesh"] rather than just *en sarki hamartias* ("in sinful flesh"]?"[27]

Cranfield summarizes five answers that have been suggested: (1) Paul did not wish to imply the reality of Christ's human nature. (2) He wanted to avoid implying that Jesus assumed fallen human

nature. Jesus really took flesh, but it was only like, and not identical with, our flesh. (3) Paul used *homoiōma* to indicate that Jesus took our fallen human nature, but it was only *like* ours because ours is guilty of actual sin and He never sinned. (4) *Homoiōma* here means "form" rather than merely "likeness." (5) *Homoiōma* here "does have its sense of 'likeness'; but the intention is not in any way to call in question. . . the reality of Christ's *sarx hamartias.* but to draw attention to the fact that, while the Son of God truly assumed *sarx hamartias.* He never became *sarx hamartias* and nothing more, nor even *sarx hamartias* indwelt by the Holy Spirit and nothing more (as a Christian might be described as being), but always remained Himself" (cf. Phil. 2:7).[28]

As to number 1, Cranfield notes that it attributes to the phrase a docetic sense inconsistent with Paul's thought. And it is contradicted in this very verse (Rom. 8:3) by *en tē sarki.* He objects to the traditional answer (number 2) by saying that it "is open to the general theological objection that it was not unfallen, but fallen, human nature which needed redeeming."[29] In regard to number 3, he points out that *homoiōma* is related to the nature discussed and not the question of sinning. "The difference between Christ's freedom from actual sin and our sinfulness is not a matter of the character of His human nature (of its being not quite the same as ours), but of what He did with His human nature."[30] As to number 4, he comments that if Paul meant to say this, it is difficult to understand why he did not simply say *en sarki hamartias*.

Cranfield says: "We conclude that. . . [5] is to be accepted as the most probable explanation of Paul's use of *homoiōma* here, and understand Paul's thought to be that the Son of God assumed the selfsame fallen human nature that is ours, but that in His case that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him—He never ceased to be the eternal Son of God."[31]

Like Nygren and Barth, Cranfield sees this passage as stressing where the conflict occurred. God's "condemnation" of sin "took place in the flesh, i. e. , in Christ's flesh, Christ's human nature.

. . .If we recognize that Paul believed it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the unintermittent warfare of His whole earthly life by which He forced our rebellious nature to render a perfect obedience to God."[32]

In a footnote to this, he says: "Those who believe that it was fallen human nature which was assumed have even more cause than had the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism to see the whole of Christ's life on earth as having redemptive significance; for, on this view, Christ's life before His actual ministry and death was not just a standing where unfallen Adam had stood without yielding to the temptation to which Adam succumbed, but a matter of starting from where we start, subjected to all the evil pressures which we inherit, and using the altogether unpromising and unsuitable material of our corrupt nature to work out a perfect, sinless obedience."[33]

F. *The High Priest's solidarity with humanity (Hebrews).* One of the principal lines of argument in Hebrews is that the high priest's efficacy depends upon how closely he identifies with those for whom he mediates. Jesus is a perfect high priest because of His real identification with man's predicaments, whether of the spirit (temptations) or of the body (privations and death).

1. *Hebrews 2:11:* "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren." For specific soteriological purposes, Jesus and His fellow human beings had a common human heredity (this is clearly stated in verse 14) .

2. *Hebrews 2:14:* "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself *likewise* partook of the *same* nature." Paul is here more explicit and provides the specific context for the chapter. For Jesus to be truly man's Saviour and effective High Priest, He had to enter man's terrible predicament, the enemy-occupied territory of human flesh shared by all descendants of fallen Adam.

3. *Hebrews 2:16,18:* "For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted."

Here the person and work of Jesus are unified in a breathtaking statement. All the risks resident in assuming fallen human nature are recognized in this chapter, but in no place more clearly than in these verses. Paul's inescapable message seems

to be that Jesus completely identified with sinful men and women in the liabilities inherent in the human equipment received at their birth.

Jesus is called men's "pioneer of their salvation [made] perfect through suffering" (verse 10). He was the first, from, birth to death, to break the power of sin, beating the path for all to follow. He broke down every subtle enticement to do things His way rather than His Father's. He rose triumphant in the very arena where His human counterparts have fallen, employing no other weapons than fallen men and women have at their disposal.

In its most immediately obvious sense, verses 16-18 seem to say that Christ took the human nature common to all post-Fall humanity.

4. *Hebrews 4: 15:* "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus felt the full force of temptation because He never succumbed. Those who yield too soon never know the oppression of spirit caused by the full tug of a self-serving opportunity. From the standpoint of the theology of the great controversy, this text strongly suggests that because Jesus did not sin, no man must sin. Our High Priest was "made like his brethren in every respect," was "tempted as we are," yet He did not sin. "*Let us then* with confidence draw near" (verse 16) is a marvelous, intensely coherent, and tight transition of thought. What more could language say in getting across Paul's argument: Jesus was victorious with the same liabilities and disadvantages common to all mankind; therefore, men and women can also be victorious with the same help He depended on if they too "draw near" in time of need.

When Paul refers to our Lord's temptations, he employs simple language in order to be easily understood. Whatever the nature of temptations common to man, whether they arise from within (such as envy, self-will, self-exaltation, self-indulgence) or from without (such as direct appeal from Satan, or objects that elicit unholy desire), Jesus experienced them. He had the power of choice and the heredity that weakens and misdirects it. He had a nature wherein temptations common to men and women could find appeal. But in Jesus, evil found no response. In only one sense was Jesus exempt from being "tempted as we are"—He never had to contend with a willpower weakened by His own previous decisions to sin.

Paul does not support such ideas as that (1) Jesus was exempt from the clamor of humanity's fallen nature or that (2) He never risked all or that (3) He didn't really fight the battle of faith as every son and daughter of Adam has had to fight it. Despite His inherited human liabilities, Jesus did not sin—such is a substantial part of Paul's simple good news.

5. *Hebrews 5:7-9:* "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

The followers of Jesus apparently remembered Him as a man such as they were, except that they could find no fault in Him (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22; Heb. 4:15; 9:14). He was known as a man who radiated unusual courage, integrity, personal freedom under all kinds of stress, and victory at every turn, under every circumstance.

But the New Testament does not indicate that His followers ever considered that this remarkable Man could not sin. It does not suggest that He possessed special advantages or that all His marvelous moral characteristics were precast in some other world. His disciples had eaten and slept with Him; they had listened to His most intimate prayers and heard His most confidential comments on circumstances and people in good times and bad. They knew that the counsel He was giving them was counsel He Himself was practicing.

His followers had every reason to believe that Christ's goodness was a result of daily struggles with the same temptations they had to face. Paul could not say it more plainly: "He learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect. . ." In other words, His moral development was an example of how all men and women would develop a character such as His: They would be made perfect by learning obedience amid hard decisions. They must choose God's will and reject the allure of temptations, whether from within or from without.

Barth wrote plainly regarding the inner temptations and struggles that Jesus had to face: "The New Testament has treated the *vere homo* so seriously that it has portrayed the obedience of Jesus throughout as a genuine struggle to obey, as a

seeking and finding. In Luke 2:40 it speaks of a 'growing and waxing strong,' and in Luke 2:52 it speaks of a *prokoptein* (strictly speaking, an extension by blows, as a smith stretches metal with hammers. . .) of Jesus in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men. Moreover the temptation narrative (Matthew 4:1ff.) obviously describes the very opposite of a mock battle, and it would be wrong to conceive of it as a merely 'eternal molestation by Satan,' to reject it as an 'inward temptation and trial' of Jesus. To the *vere homo* there also belongs what we call man's inner nature."[34]

As one modern scholar stated it: "It is hardly a picture [Heb. 5:7-9] that the early Christians would have invented: they would be more likely to have created a picture of effortless superiority to all human weakness, such as we find later. . . .In any case, its value lies in giving us the most forceful evidence that Jesus was remembered as a man of like passions with ourselves who had to win in the same way as everyone else."[35]

In Hebrews 5 Paul refers to Christ's "loud cries and tears" and to the fact that He "learned obedience." We have only to review the texts that speak about Christ's personal will and how He had to use it—deliberately and perhaps painfully—to understand Paul's reference. At times Jesus had to struggle to subordinate His will to His Father's. It is because of this that He becomes relevant to us, that He truly becomes our Saviour and Example.

The "'nevertheless'" in the Gethsemane experience (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42), for instance, is patently *not* playacting. Jesus could have recoiled from the cross and turned from His Father's will. He could have sinned. But when the decision had to be made, He did not fail. "'Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done'" (Luke 22:42).

Scripture says Jesus was "being made perfect" during His thirty-three years on earth. Perhaps not enough attention has been given to this important Biblical account of how He developed. Jesus emphasized His full humanity when He reminded His hearers: "'I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me'" (John5:30). "'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me'" (chap. 6:38). Paul later recapitulated Christ's experience as one who had to choose between His will and His Father's: "For Christ did not please himself" (Rom. 15:3).

Sebastian Moore summed it up well: "If you have never seen Jesus, in your mind's eye, as faced with inescapable political, social, and personal-integrity options, then you are a Docetist. Your Christ never existed. He is a puppet in a theologian's puppet show."[36]

The book of Hebrews constantly emphasizes that Jesus is our perfect high priest and sacrifice *because* He stood in the same arena where all sons of Adam stand. It stresses He fills those roles because He faced every temptation common to sinners, He experienced every need of helpless men—all without capitulating to sin.

In order to explain adequately how a perfect atonement could be made, Hebrews seems rather obviously to require not a pre-Fall but a post-Fall human nature of the Son of God. Jesus must be one with man in every respect from the standpoint of human *equipment* (the principle of solidarity), but He is not one with them as a sinner, that is, from the standpoint of human *permance* (the principle of dissimilarity).

These two principles describe a simple reality; they do not constitute a paradox, as if two irreconcilable truths must be kept in tension. These mutually supporting principles made Jesus into the divine fact that forms the basis for all the rest of the good news. In the Incarnation, the Saviour became a man in every a essential respect; He was beset with all the human liabilities. He has shown the universe that the sons and daughters of Adam, through His grace, can keep the law of God and prove Satan wrong.[37] In n taking on man's nature as it was when He became incarnate, Jesus spanned the gulf between heaven and earth, God and man. In so doing, He became the ladder that was both secure in heaven and planted solidly on earth, one that men and women could trust.[38]

Barth draws the connections

Karl Barth drew with quick, clean strokes the indissoluble connection between the humanity of Jesus and man's salvation: "Flesh (*sarx*) is the concrete form of human nature marked by Adam's fall. . . .The Word is not only the eternal Word of God but 'flesh' as well, i.e., all that we are and exactly like us even in our opposition to Him. It is because of this that He makes contact with us and is accessible for us. In this way, and only in this way, is He God's revelation to us. He would not be revelation if He were not man. And He would not

be man if He were not 'flesh' in this definite sense. . . .

"He was not a sinful man. But inwardly and outwardly His situation was that of a sinful man. He did nothing that Adam did. But He lived life in the form it must take on the basis and assumption of Adam's act. He bore innocently what Adam and all of us in Adam have been guilty of."[39]

"There must be no weakening or obscuring of the saving truth that the nature which God assumed in Christ is identical with our nature as we see it in the light of the Fall. If it were otherwise, how could Christ be really like us? What concern would we have with Him? We stand before God characterized by the Fall. God's Son not only assumed our nature but He entered the concrete form of our nature, under which we stand before God as damned and lost. He did not produce and establish this form differently from all of us; though innocent, He became guilty; though without sin, He was made to be sin. But these things must not cause us to detract from His complete solidarity with us and in that way to remove Him to a distance from us."[40]

"The point is that, faced with God, Jesus did not run away from the state and situation of fallen man, but took it upon Himself, lived it and bore it Himself as the eternal Son of God. How could He have done so if in His human existence He had not been exposed to real inward temptation and trial, if like other men He had not trodden an inner path, if He had not cried to God and wrestled with God in real inward need? It was in this wrestling, in which He was in solidarity with us to the uttermost, that there was done that which is not [done] by us, the will of God."[41]

In commenting on Barth's position, John Thompson, joint editor of *Biblical Theology* and professor of systematic theology of Presbyterian College, Queen's University, Belfast, asks: "Does the assumption of fallen humanity imply sin in Christ? What is the Biblical witness? There can be little doubt that in this regard Menken, Irving, Barth, and others are right as over against the long weight of ecclesiastical tradition and exegesis. Those passages adduced by Barth as testimony to this view (see *Church Dogmatics*, vol.1, pt. 2, p.152, e.g., Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13;, Matt. 27:38; etc.) are much more readily interpreted in this way than in the other. There is also clear testimony in the New Testament to the sinlessness of Jesus. These two strands, though logically hard to reconcile, are yet clearly discernible and point to the mystery, paradox, and meaning of the Incarnation."[42]

Until the third quarter of the twentieth century Adventist spokesmen consistently set forth Jesus as one who took our fallen nature. Like many non-Adventist scholars, they would have been appalled at the nonsequitur that to believe Jesus took fallen human nature necessitates believing also that He had to be a sinner![43] Or that *He* would need a Saviour! Such assumptions are straw men. In no way did a taint of sin rest on Jesus—because He was never a sinner. He never had "an evil propensity"[44] because He never sinned. Genuine temptations, real enticements to satisfy worthy desires in self-centered ways—unquestionably our Lord experienced these with every possibility of yielding. But "not for one moment"[45] did Jesus permit temptations to conceive and give birth to sin. He too waged stern battles with self and against potentially sinful hereditary tendencies, but He never permitted an inclination to become sinful[46] (see James 1:14, 15). He kept saying No, while all other human beings have said Yes.

We close where we began, by asking again the first question that should direct all studies regarding the humanity of Jesus: *Why* did Jesus come to earth? As noted earlier, He came to silence Satan's misrepresentations and accusations and to fulfill the role of fallen man's substitute, surety, and example. *The reason for His coming determined the way He came*—or else His coming would not have fulfilled its purpose. He gloriously triumphed over evil; He became the suitable substitute, the pioneer man, mankind's model. And He achieved all of this amid the worst of circumstances, exempt from nothing, in the same heredity shared by men and women He came to save. Viewed from the standpoint of the basic issues in the great controversy, His victory takes on a marvelous and eternal perspective. And surely this is exceedingly good news in a universe awash with the bitter fruit of sin and mesmerized with endless misrepresentations about the character of God and what He expects from His believing children.

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1 J. F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1957), pp. 255ff.; Arthur C. McGiffert, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), pp. 276-290; John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), pp. 39, 40, 101-110, 196ff. See also "Alexandrian Theology" and "Cyril" in J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), pp. 26, 277, 278.

2 Douglas, *loc. cit*., See also "Antiochene Theology," p. 49, and "Theodore of Mopsuestia," pp. 964, 965.

3 Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 172, 173.

4 *Ibid*., pp. 173, 174. See also Robinson, *op. cit*., p. 110; Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, ed., *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 122.

5 Ellen G. White, in *The SDA Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), vol. 5, p. 1129.

6 _____, in *The Youth's Instructor*, Oct. 13, 1898.

7 *Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957), pp. 59, 60.

8 See E. G. White's criticism of this argument, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958) book 1, p. 408.

9 John Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 52, quoted in Robinson, *op. cit*., p. 89. Robinson here notes that Knox present the ultimate choice for Christology thus: 'One may believe that Jesus was *not* an actual normal man, a man like us, and that He could be the Saviour only *because* He was not; or one may believe that He *was* an actual norman man—and moreover the particular man He was—and that He could become the Saviour only *because* He was.'"—Page 88.

10 See E.G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 190, 125, 126; in *Signs of the Times*, Dec. 1, 1890.

11 _____, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 49.

12 _____, in *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 20, 1890.

13 _____, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 686.

14 _____, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 135; in *Signs of the Times*, Dec. 22, 1887; July 18, 1878. See aslo *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 136-141.

15 _____, *God's Amazing Grace* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1973), p. 141; see also *Education*, pp. 77, 78.

16 _____, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1958), p. 64.

17 See the surveys in Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), pp. 129-189; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 155ff.; D.M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1961), pp. 16-20.

18 L. L. Wilkins and D. Priebe, trans. *Jesus—God and Man* (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1968), p. 362.

19 See Johnson, *op. cit.,* pp. 24, 25.

20 See Robinson, *op. cit.,* pp. 36, 37.

21 See Johnson, *op. cit.,* pp. 40-45.

22 White, *God's Amazing Grace,* p. 141; White, in *The SDA Bible Commentary,* vol. 6, p. 1092.

23 *Ibid.,* p. 1074.

24 See William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 750-752.

25 Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 314, 315. See also H.C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1899), pp .138, 139.

26 Barth, *op. cit.,* p. 156.

27 C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans,* vol. 1,*The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd., 1980), p. 379.

28 *Ibid*, pp. 379-383.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 Barth, *op. cit.,* p. 158.

35 Robinson, *op. cit.,* p. 78.

36 Quoted in Robinson, *op. cit.,* p. 93.

37 E. G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), p 323.

38 _____, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 311, 312; see also *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 147.

39 Barth, *op. cit.,* pp. 151, 152.

40 *Ibid.,* p. 153. (Italics supplied.)

41 *Ibid.,* p. 158.

42 John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978), p. 149.

43 Ellen White, for example, took special care not to give the slightest impression that Jesus sinned in thought or act (*The Desire of Ages,* p. 123). He remained untainted, though He was tempted from within and without (*ibid*., p. 329; *The Ministry of Healing* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942], p. 71; *Selected Messages,* book 1, p. 95. See also *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 177; *In Heavenly Places* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1967], p. 155; *Signs of the Times,* Oct. 17, 1900; *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 122, 123). He did not overcome sin because He was God or because He had a special kind of human nature; He overcame because He willed to resist, depending upon enabling grace as every overcoming Christian may (*Selected Messages,* book 3, pp. 127-142; see also *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 73, 336, 363).

And yet she described the nature Jesus took in such phrases as the following: "man's fallen nature" (*Early Writings* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945], pp. 150, 152; *The Desire of Ages,* p. 112; *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 134); "the form and nature of fallen man" (*Review and Herald,* Dec. 31, 1872); "the place of fallen Adam" (*ibid.,* Feb. 24, 1874); "identical with our own" *Selected Messages,* book 3, p. 129); "bearing the humanity we bear" (*The SDA Bible Commentary,* vol. 7, p. 925); "our sinful nature" (*Review and Herald,* Dec. 15, 1896); "man's nature in its fallne condition" (*The SDA Bible Commentary,* vol. 5, p. 1131); "fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin" (*The Youth's Instructor,* Dec. 20, 1900); "the nature of Adam, the transgressor" (*The SDA Bible Commentary,* vol. 7, p. 926); "the level of fallen humanity" (*General Conference Bulletin,* April 23, 1901); "the head of the fallen race" (*Signs of the Times,* April 26, 1905); and "the offending nature of man" (*Review and Herald,* July 17, 1900).

Other influential Adventists who have set forth the post-Fall human nature of Christ include: A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, J. H. Durland, W. W. Prescott, S. N. Haskell, G. E. Fifield, Uriah Smith, M.C. Wilcox, Joseph E. Steed, Allen Walker, H. M. Kelley, G. B. Starr, Meade MacGuire, R. S. Owen, W. Howard James, C. P. Bollman, T. M. French, A. G. Stewart, M. N. Campbell, H. L. Rudy, DallasYoungs, A. E. Lickey, W. B. Ochs, Frederick Lee, Carlyle B. Haynes, W. H. Branson, and M.L. Andreasen. Until its revision in 1949, *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* clearly taught this position.

44 White, quoted in *The SDA Bible Commentary,* vol. 5, p. 1128.

45 *ibid*.; see also *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 131, 132.

46 *Selected Messages,* book 3, pp. 131, 132; see also *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 49, 122, 123.