

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant. Psalm 25:14

Vol. 21, No. 7

Straight and Narrow

July 2012



Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea? (Jeremiah 5:22)



The True Christ vs. the Antichrist (Part 2)

The first part of this study examined Lucifer's desire for worship. We learned that in order to obtain this worship, he will portray himself as Christ and before this portrayal, he will misrepresent what the real Christ is like and will create a desire within the people to worship the kind of savior he presents himself to be.

We noticed that when Satan worked to deceive Israel, he worked slowly and subtly, bringing change into Israel's worship slowly, so that Israel changed leaders and did not know it. Jesus has given warnings to his people that, especially in the end of time, many will think that they are worshiping and serving him, when they are really worshiping the devil. This was sadly illustrated in the recent death of Mark Wolford, pastor of the Apostolic House of the Lord Jesus in Matoaka, West Virginia, who died on May 27, the result of receiving a rattlesnake bite during a religious service held in Panther State Park. Wolford was a Pentecostal preacher who believed in signs, such as drinking poison and handling dangerous vipers. His faith was centered in a misunderstanding of Mark 16:16–18:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

While some have seen in these verses a command to take up serpents, others who have carefully studied the construction of the Greek text, see the matter differently:

In the Greek the first two clauses in Mark 16:18 may be understood as conditional clauses with the third clause as the conclusion. An interpretive rendering would be, "And if they be compelled to **pick up snakes with their hands** and if they should be compelled to **drink deadly poison**, it shall by no means (*ou mç*, emphatic negative; cf. 13:2) harm them." This promise of immunity by divine protection in either situation refers to occasions when

persecutors would force believers to do these things. This does not warrant voluntary snake-handling or drinking of poison, practices not attested in the early church. Since Paul's encounter with a snake at Malta was unintentional (cf. Acts 28:3–5), the New Testament records no actual instance of either of the experiences described here. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, entry on Mark 16:17–18).

Furthermore, when Jesus was tempted by Satan, the devil took him to the top of the temple and quoted Psalm 91:11, 12 to him, indicating that God would care for someone who was supposed to be his Son. Jesus rebuked him, however, and taught that it would be presumption to voluntarily put God in a position where he had to save anyone. (See Matthew 4:5–7.)

Wolford was one of the few remaining serpent-handlers from a movement that is about one hundred years old. It would be hard to question his sincerity or honesty, but he was dead wrong! We may believe with all of our hearts that we are serving the true Christ and doing his bidding when in reality, we are following another spirit.

Within Christianity there is a lot of discussion concerning *antichrist* or, sometimes, *the antichrist*, focusing on a specific person to come. This antichrist is associated with the "man of sin" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and with the first beast of Revelation 13. Seventh-day Adventists have historically identified the papacy as the man of sin, the antichrist. We even presented this belief as one of our fundamental beliefs:

XIII. That as the man of sin, the papacy, has thought to change times and laws (the laws of God), Dan. 7:25, and has misled almost all Christendom in regard to the fourth commandment, we find a prophecy of a reform in this respect to be wrought among believers just before the coming of Christ. Isa. 56:1, 2, 1 Pet. 1:5, Rev. 14:12, &c. (1872 Fundamental Beliefs)

Sadly, this belief is no longer a part of our fundamental beliefs. In other words, you do not have to believe anything about the papacy to be a good Seventh-day Adventist

member or to be a Seventh-day Adventist minister, one who is supposed to give the three angels' messages! But perhaps you did not know that this was ever a fundamental belief, for it was discarded when the 1931 statement was published, but it has been the official position of the corporate church for the last four score and one year to have no official position against the papacy.

The issue of antichrist is important. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:5), and Paul noted: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). If we have the wrong gospel, we have the wrong Jesus and are accursed!

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-8)

The Spirit of Prophecy further declares the importance of knowing the true Christ from antichrist:

Those who become confused in their understanding of the Word, who fail to see the meaning of antichrist, will surely place themselves on the side of antichrist. There is no time now for us to assimilate with the world. Daniel is standing in his lot and in his place. The prophecies of Daniel and of John are to be understood. They interpret each other. They give to the world truths which every one should understand. These prophecies are to be witnesses in the world. By their fulfillment in these last days they will explain themselves. (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 949)

We are certainly to understand the prophecies of Daniel and John. Both write of antichrist, but interestingly, neither the book of Daniel nor the book of Revelation mention the term *antichrist*. John is the only Bible writer to use this term, and this usage is in his first and second epistles. Before we go to these references, let us note that in identifying the papacy as the man of sin, Adventists have noted the assumed changing of the Ten Commandment law as the sign of the papacy's authority. While we clearly believe that the Sabbath/Sunday issue is to be the great test in the end of time, this test is simply a revelation of the greater test concerning our loyalty to God. One may have an intellectual knowledge of last day events and know events in their proper order, but if one does not have a strong anchor-hold upon his or her God, which only comes with a proper understanding of him, he or she will not be able to stand against the greatest pressure ever brought to bear against any generation.

The term *antichrist* is only used by John in his epistles. Let us first note these verses and then the main characteristics and doctrines of antichrist, as defined by John:

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John 2:18, 19)

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Who-soever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. (1 John 2:22, 23)

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3)

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 1:7)

One of the characteristics of antichrist is that it has its origin within true Christianity. John says that "they went out from us." Paul notes that the man of sin "exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). In Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul defines the temple of God upon the earth to be the Christian church:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Antichrist, then, must appear, at some time, to have a Christian appearance and speech. In John's day, John says that they [the antichrists] had gone out from them, but in what way did they go out? Was this a literal separation of people, a separation in thought and doctrine, or both? It seems very obvious that both types of separations are correct, within limits. For antichrist to show himself in the temple of God, he must be within the church; however, history has shown that, after a certain time, the natural progression of antichrist toward the ways of Satan and God's followers toward God, brings about a literal separation.

Antichrist is more than the papacy alone, for there were those (plural) in John's day called antichrist. Clearly the papacy is the standard for defining the antichrist, but there is a broad spirit to antichrist that should not be neglected.

What are the doctrinal points of antichrist, as revealed in John's epistles? Is Sunday worship mentioned? No. Is the nature of man mentioned as a characteristic of antichrist? No,

but let us notice carefully what is revealed. First John 2:22 and 23 reveal two similar doctrinal points about antichrist. Firstly, antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ. Secondly, antichrist denies the Father and Son. In denying the Son, antichrist denies that the Father is truly the Father of the Son. The antichrist also denies that Jesus has come in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7).

Antichrist Denies That Jesus Is the Christ

The word *Christ* is not a name, but rather, a title. It means the anointed one. It is the Greek equivalent of messiah in the Hebrew. In the case of the biblical plan of salvation, the Christ is the one that God the Father anointed with his spirit to fully represent his character and to be the savior of the world. In the New Testament Jesus is repeatedly called the Christ, but interestingly, it is in the context of being the Son of God. Please notice in all the following verses, from different situations and different testimonies, that the Christ is called the Son of God:

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Peter understood the Christ would be the Son of God. The other disciples with Peter noted this relationship, “And we believe and are sure that thou art *that Christ, the Son of the living God*” (John 6:69).

When Jesus was on trial before Caiaphas, he was “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Finally Caiaphas could not stand the silence, and he “said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be *the Christ, the Son of God*” (Matthew 26:63). Here we see even Caiaphas understood that God’s anointed was his Son.

Mark obtained much of the information for his gospel from Peter, so it is no surprise that his gospel starts by saying, “The beginning of the gospel of *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” (Mark 1:1).

Martha, in whose home Jesus had rested and taught, said: “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art *the Christ, the Son of God*, which should come into the world” (John 11:27).

John declared the main purpose of writing his gospel was so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of God*; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

The book of Acts also declares this relationship. After hearing Philip expound upon the prophecies concerning Jesus, he wanted to be baptized: “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus *Christ is the Son of God*” (Acts 8:37). The first thing that Paul preached after his conversion was this glorious truth which would stand forever as eternal truth and the foundational truth opposed to antichrist: “And straightway he [Paul] preached *Christ* in the synagogues, that he [Jesus] is *the Son of God*” (Acts 9:20).

Even the devils acknowledged the relationship between the Christ and God’s Son. When Jesus was casting devils out of people, Luke records the demons as saying: “Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ” (Luke 4:41).

Antichrist Denies the Father and Son

Closely connected with the first point is the second—antichrist denies that Jesus is the Son of God and that the Father is truly the Father of Jesus Christ. Those who deny the sonship of Jesus and the fatherhood of God are pronounced to be liars (1 John 2:22). They are called liars and rightfully so, for they deny the one saving truth that supports all other truths—the truth that Jesus is really the only begotten Son of God. Let us look at clear testimony of Scripture:

God the Father testified concerning Jesus Christ. At the baptism of Jesus, God spoke: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Here God calls Jesus his “beloved Son.” The exact same phrase is used in Matthew 17:5, where the Father acknowledged, at the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus to be his Son.

In talking to Nicodemus Jesus stated: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16–18). Here Jesus claims to be God’s Son and states that God, indeed, did have a son to send.

As we noted earlier Caiaphas asked Jesus if he was the Christ, the Son of God; in fact, he said: “I adjure thee by the living God” (Matthew 26:63). This was equivalent to asking him under an oath if he were the Christ, the Son of God. Mark records Jesus’ plain reply: “I am” (Mark 14:62). Ellen G. White adds this insightful comment:

To this appeal Christ could not remain silent. There was a time to be silent, and a time to speak. He had not spoken until directly questioned. He knew that to answer now would make His death certain. But the appeal was made by the highest acknowledged authority of the nation, and in the name of the Most High. Christ would not fail to show proper respect for the law. More than this, His own relation to the Father was called in question. He must plainly declare His character and mission. Jesus had said to His disciples, “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.” Matt. 10:32. Now by His own example He repeated the lesson (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 706, 707).

The apostles declared Jesus to be the Son of God: “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist:

some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:13–17). While Peter’s confession is known by many, it was actually Nathanael who first acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God. In John 1:49, we read: “Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”

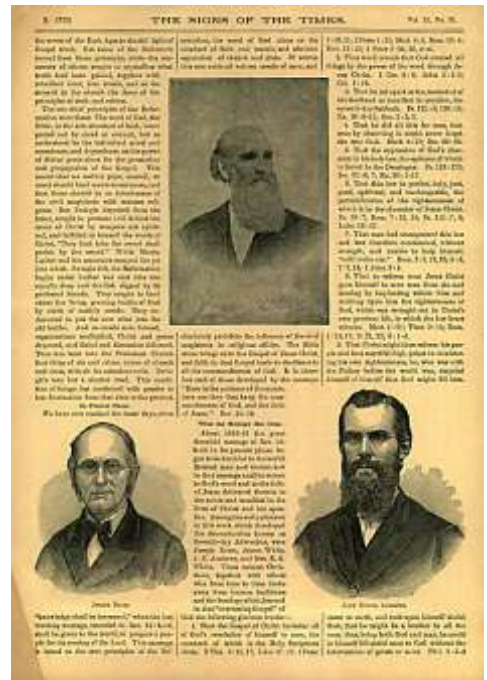
The first truth that the apostle Paul preached after his conversion was that Jesus was the Son of God: “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:19, 20).

There is but one way of escape for the sinner. There is but one agency whereby he may be cleansed from sin. He must accept the propitiation that has been made by the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. The shed blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” A complete offering has been made; for “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,”—not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but 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. (*The Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895)

The specific issue of *The Signs of the Times* in which this article was published is important. It was entitled “Historic Sketch of Seventh-day Adventists.” This issue, as its title declares, was a presentation of our history and of

our place in prophecy. Anything published in this issue would certainly need to be representative of what we believed and stood for as a people. In the article that Ellen White wrote for this issue, she is very clear and concise as to the identity of Jesus and his relationship to his Father. Jesus is not a son that has been created, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe; nor is he a son by adoption. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.



Page from *Signs of the Times*, Historical Sketch issue



Thus we see a clear and consistent testimony that Jesus is the Son of God. The spirit of antichrist denies this fundamental truth and with it, by the very definition of the words, denies the fatherhood of God because if Jesus were not God’s Son, then the person we call the father could not be a father in any real sense of the term. This is why John writes “whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:23). This spirit of antichrist is certainly in the papacy and in apostate Protestantism, and it is in all the other major religions of the world, as well, reinforcing the verity of Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:13: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.”

An examination of the major religions of the world reveals that they all deny that Jesus is the Son of God. Hinduism declares that Jesus was a great teacher. Some believe that after his crucifixion he was reincarnated and became a part of the godhead, but all deny that he is the Son of God.

Muslims claim to also believe in Jesus. The Koran speaks of Jesus, calling him a great prophet, but in no way the Son of God:



Say ye: “We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah in Islam.” (Su 2:136)

The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; he created him from dust then said to him: “Be”: And he was. (Su 3:59)

Say: “We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in the Books given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will in Islam.” (Su 3:84)

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was no more than an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: . . . Allah is One God: Glory be to Him: Far Exalted is He above having a son. (Su 4:171)

These references make it clear that though the Muslims claim to believe in Jesus, this Jesus is not the same Jesus proclaimed in the Bible.

Jehovah’s Witnesses, while denying the doctrine of the trinity, also deny that Jesus is the literal Son of God. They teach, instead, that Jesus was the first and highest of all *created beings* and that, because of his perfect life, God elevated him to the position of his adopted son.

Through the doctrine of the trinity, Catholicism and most of Protestantism deny that Jesus is the Son of God. Wait, are you thinking to yourself, *I thought that the trinity taught Jesus to be the second person of the godhead, God the Son?* Interestingly, though Jesus is called “the Son of God” several times in the Bible, he is never called *God the Son* anywhere in the Bible, nor in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.

Jesus is declared to be the Son of God, though, and he further declares that God is his Father.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. (Mark 14:36)

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46)

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:17, 18)

I am come in my Father’s name. (John 5:43)

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one. (John 10:29, 30)

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. (John 17:1)

The antichrist denies the Father and the Son. Notice the language. Antichrist is not said to deny God and Jesus but rather, that there is a Father and a Son. The doctrine of the trinity, while claiming to believe in both God and Jesus, denies that Jesus is the literal Son of God. The trinitarian doctrine, instead, teaches that Jesus is called the son to help us to understand God’s love! While the trinitarian doctrine allows for three distinct persons within the Godhead, it denigrates the sonship of Jesus, as well as his sacrifice on Calvary, to one of role-playing. The trinitarian doctrine states that the terms *Father* and *Son*, as revealed in Scripture, do not really mean father and son, but rather express roles they accept in carrying out of the plan of salvation. For example:

In the New Testament, Jesus used Father to bring us into a close and personal relationship with God (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 26, 2nd ed.).

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, They took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan (*The Signs of the Times*, July 1985).

This is basically the same view that LeRoy Froom advocated in his book *Movement of Destiny*, in an effort to promote trinitarianism. During the middle 1950s, while preparing his first book on Seventh-day Adventists, Walter Martin approached the brethren in the General Conference, asking for their official position on the Godhead. A trinitarian position was essential to remove Seventh-day Adventism from the status of a cult.

Do the terms *Father* and *Son* refer to roles that God and Christ play, or do they state the literal relationship between the two? Does John 3:16 really say “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” or should it say that God so loved the world he gave his fellow God? Does the wise man merely ask a rhetorical question, when he asks “who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and *what is his son’s name*, if thou canst tell” (Proverbs 30:4)?

The Scriptures clearly state that God and Christ are two distinct beings and that the terms *Father* and *Son* are not used to express the roles portrayed but express a real and personal relationship between the two. Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). He then went on to explain that oneness:

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for

them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:11, 20–23).

Early Adventists accepted these verses in a literal way. They believed in a real God and in a real Son. Sister White wrote that “the unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 269). James White also noted:

Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one as he was one with his Father. This prayer did not contemplate one disciple with twelve heads, but twelve disciples, made one in object and effort in the cause of their master. Neither are the Father and the Son parts of the “three-one God.” They are two distinct beings, yet one in the design and accomplishment of redemption. The redeemed, from the first who shares in the great redemption, to the last, all ascribe the honor, and glory, and praise, of their salvation, to both God and the Lamb. (*Life Incidents*, p. 343)

We can see the Bible is clear that Jesus is the Son of God. Antichrist denies this truth, and not simply the papacy, but all who follow after her, as well. The whole world is wondering after the beast in this matter, but why is this so important?

God is a god of truth, but we call him a liar when we teach that even though he says he is the Father of Jesus Christ, we declare that he is really not his Father. God says, however, that the liar is the one who denies his fatherhood to Jesus and the sonship of Jesus to him.

God declares that his love is the heart-changing power that will draw mankind to him. God claims to love man “with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3). God claims that this love can change man. How does God declare his love? What proof does he provide to convince man, beyond any doubt, of his love? He offers the gift of his only begotten Son.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9, 10)

Could God have said it any clearer? If Jesus were not his only begotten Son, God could have told us of another type of relationship. While we only have human language with which to understand this, God invented language and is the master communicator, and he says that the measure of his love is revealed in the depths of the gift he has given. Suppose I give someone a nice pencil or pen for a graduation gift.

I might receive a thank you note and a nice verbal expression of thanks. But suppose I gave that person a new car, would he or she perceive more care and love? Maybe, but we are sure that the cost of the gift reveals a greater desire to bless and help. But you might think, *wait a minute, God has infinite resources and to him a universe is easier to give than for me to give a pencil.* Exactly! So, for God to give a great gift, it must be something infinite, not finite and not something that can be created, such as the universe and things within it. What gift of infinite price could he give, then, as a demonstration of his infinite love? His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ is the gift that provides such a demonstration! The trinitarian doctrine, in effect, says that God did not love me so much that he gave his only begotten Son. This doctrine destroys God’s love—his great drawing power. It destroys the very foundation of the sinner’s faith, love, and acceptance with God. This is an attack at the most basic, foundational level of the Christian’s faith. No wonder God calls this antichrist!

Antichrist Denies That Jesus Came in the Flesh

The third key doctrine of antichrist is that antichrist denies Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:2, 3; 2 John 1:7). This is not as simple as it, at first, sounds, since few would deny that Jesus had literal flesh. Even after his resurrection he said to his doubting disciples, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). If Jesus had flesh (Greek: *sarka*, from *sarx*) after his resurrection, we can be sure he had flesh before the resurrection. While this text may appear to be some form of denial of Jesus’ literal flesh, there is obviously more involved.

The expression *in the flesh* occurs twenty-eight times in the Bible, twenty-six of which are in the New Testament. Several of these references simply mean an existence in literal flesh and blood. For example:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί). (Romans 2:28)

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί), who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) made by hands. (Ephesians 2:11)

The Greek expression ἐν σαρκί literally translates *in flesh*, but the Greek root work for flesh, *sarx*, is in the dative case in these verses, functioning as the direct object of the sentence. In context, therefore, it needs the definite article, and it is fully proper to supply the article in English, since it is implied in the Greek.

As we continue to study the expression *in the flesh* in the New Testament, we see it also carries the concept of either an unconverted state or of a weakened position. For example:

For when we were *in the flesh* (ἐν τῇ σαρκί), the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (Romans 7:5)

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί), but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:7–9)

Here the meaning of “in the flesh” is clearly something outside of the physical boundaries of the normal definition and is connected to the inner nature, or state, of mankind. In Romans 8:9, we read of believers who “are not in the flesh,” but they still have physical flesh and blood. Based upon these, and similar, texts, some historic Adventists declare that John is saying that antichrist declares Jesus came in sinless flesh, thus denying that he came in the sinful flesh the rest of humanity must partake of and struggle with day-by-day. While this surely is a part of the doctrine of antichrist, we must limit it, so that we do not say that Jesus was ever in an unconverted, or fallen, state of existence,

John declares that there were people, even in his day, who were saying that Jesus did not come in the flesh. What was the point, or purpose, of such a teaching? If Jesus did not come in the flesh, how did he come? What kind of being was Jesus? The answer is obviously some other kind of person, or being, than those of the humanity he came to save. In other words, if Jesus did not come in the flesh, he came exempt from the weaknesses and limitations of humanity. Jesus was some kind of superman who, because of his nature, did not have to meet the temptations we have to face. Some people also teach that Jesus had unlimited power at his disposal to use in the overcoming of sin and that he did not have to struggle with all the temptations humanity faces. Being a super-person Jesus could not truly be tempted as humanity is tempted, nor could he die for the sins of the world! This kind of doctrine certainly fits well into the work of Satan, for it strikes directly at the heart of the plan of salvation.

Antichrist’s Foundational Doctrine

When Seventh-day Adventists discuss the work of antichrist, or the man of sin, they are quick to mention the Sabbath issue and, in fact, the whole law; and this is not wrong, for Bible prophecy foretold that the papacy would “think to change times and laws” (Daniel 7:25). We are swift to quote their words that boast in changing the Ten Commandments and, specifically, the Sabbath. For example:

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday

to Sunday. (Peter Geiermann, *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, p. 50)

The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday. (*The Catholic Mirror*, September 23, 1893; reprinted in *Rome’s Challenge*, p. 24)

All this is well-documented and true, but have we examined what the Catholic Church also says about its own foundation? Let us notice two revealing statements:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith: Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. (The Athanasian Creed, Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, p. 66)

The above statement is the beginning of the Athanasian Creed. Though the creed was probably not written by Athanasius, it bears his name due to his support for the doctrine of the trinity. Our next statement is a relatively new statement:

The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church. In the New Testament there is frequent mention of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A careful reading of these scriptural passages leads to one unmistakable conclusion: each of these Persons is presented as having qualities that can belong only to God. But if there is only one God, how can this be?

The Church studied this mystery with great care and, after four centuries of clarification, decided to state the doctrine in this way: in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three gods but one God. (*Handbook for Today’s Catholic*, p. 16; 1994)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is the first universal catechism since the reformation, and its *Imprimi Potest* (Latin which means *it can be printed*) was given by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. In it we read:

TRINITY: The mystery of one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The revealed truth of **the Holy Trinity is at the very root of the Church’s living faith** as expressed in the Creed.

From the beginning, the revealed truth of the **Holy Trinity has been at the very root of the Church’s living faith**, principally by means of Baptism. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., E-Logos Version)

It should be noted that neither an *Imprimi Potest*, nor an *Imprimatur*, is given until much reflection and research is first done to be sure that the work is free from error in all

matters of Roman Catholic doctrine and morals. Because of this the work can be received as acceptable reading for faithful Roman Catholics.

The Doctrine of the Trinity Supports the Doctrine of Antichrist

The Catholic doctrine of the trinity certainly denies the full messiahship of Jesus Christ, for Mary is declared to be a co-savior with Jesus. She is said to be a mediatrix:

Moreover, Mary too is sometimes called *Mediatrix* in virtue of her cooperation in the saving mission of Christ, who alone is the unique mediator between God and humanity. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., E-Logos Version)

Furthermore, Mary is called the mother of god:

The mother of Jesus. Because she is the mother of Jesus—Son of God and second Person of the Blessed Trinity—according to the flesh, she is rightly called the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., E-Logos Version)

During confession the priest says, “Ego te absolvo (I forgive you).” Certainly this denies the sacrifice of Jesus and denies Jesus as being the only messiah.

While few Protestants today would assent to the doctrine of Mary being the mother of God and to the doctrine of her being a mediatrix, they, by virtue of their dependence upon *the church* to save them, deny the role of Jesus as the messiah and transfer a part, at least, of the role of salvation to a minister, to a priest, or to the church.

The trinitarian doctrine supports the second main pillar of the antichrist in that it denies the Father and Son. While the terms *father* and *son* are used, they are used in a way that is not in accordance with their normal biblical meaning:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. (SDA Fundamental Belief #2)

So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty. (*The Athanasian Creed*, Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, p. 67)

There is no way Jesus can be the literal son of the Father with such points as these. The doctrine uses some terms from the Bible, giving it an air of authority, but it rings hollow, compared to the reality of the sacred pages.

The trinitarian doctrine denies that Jesus truly died for the sins of the world. Instead of accepting the biblical truth that “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3), we are told that only his human body died as the sacrifice for the sins of the world! This directly contradicts Isaiah 53:10, 12, where we are told that the messiah would pour out his soul unto death.

The trinitarian doctrine makes a mockery of John 3:16. Instead of the simple truth of the plan of salvation, we are left with confusion and contradiction: “For God [a committee of three and not one] so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son [who is not his son, but actually a part of himself], that whosoever believeth in him [the second person, or the whole trinity?] should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

As we noted earlier, the very inducement God holds out to us as the reason we should serve him—his great love—is destroyed. According to the antichrist, God, whoever he is, did not love us to the degree John 3:16 says, for he did not even have a son to send, let alone offer to send a son, for our redemption.

The spirit of antichrist also pervades the new age movement and paganism, but the scope of this study is to examine the spirit of antichrist within professed Christianity.

In Part 1 of our study, we noted that when Israel entered into Baal worship during the time of Elijah, the process was a gradual one. They moved into Baal worship without realizing that they had left the worship of Jehovah. Much of the terminology was the same, much of the ritual was similar, but the worship of Baal was actually the worship of Satan. Inspiration is clear that in the last days there will be many claiming to serve God, many claiming to do his service, and many believing they are serving the only true God, when in reality they are serving Satan! You might be thinking, *that is a very strong charge!* Yes it is, but this is what the Bible says. The words of Jesus and Paul confirm it. If we have a false view of God, we are just as surely worshiping a false God as were the Israelites:

The present age is one of idolatry, as verily as was that in which Elijah lived. No outward shrine may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet thousands are following after the gods of this world—after riches, fame, pleasure, and the pleasing fables that permit man to follow the inclinations of the unregenerate heart. Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal. Many even of those who claim to be Christians have allied themselves with influences that are unalterably opposed to God and His truth. (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 177)

Today there is a movement within Seventh-day Adventism which proudly portrays itself as being *historic*. This group is quite vocal in speaking out against the teachings of the incarnation and the atonement, as found in the book *Questions on Doctrine*. Yet, these *historic* believers only wish to be *historic* back to the year 1957, when *Questions on Doctrine* was published. Most are not ready to accept the corporate church’s challenge to go back to a non-trinitarian position: “Would one be willing to accept all the content from that earlier era? Are the modern defenders of so-called historic Adventism really prepared to return to a non-Trinitarian position” (*Issues*, p. 39)? What these historic Adventists fail to realize is that the problems concerning the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement, as taught in *Questions on Doctrine* (and there are real problems), are the natural result of first accepting the doctrine of the trinity which the church did after the death of Ellen White.

God is calling for a people who will go forward in these last days and carry the reformation to its glorious, final climax. God is not going to bless a people who are backsliding and lessening the distance between themselves and the harlot of Rome, the antichrist. We have been told:

It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy. (*The Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1894)

This is interesting in the light of a statement from Elder James White who, commenting upon the reformers, stated:

The “mystery of iniquity” began to work in the church in Paul’s day. It finally crowded out the simplicity of the gospel, and corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and the church went into the wilderness. Martin Luther, and other reformers, arose in the strength of God, and with the Word and Spirit, made mighty strides in the Reformation. The greatest fault we can find in the Reformation is, the Reformers stopped reforming. Had they gone on, and onward, till they had left the last vestige of Papacy behind, such as natural immortality, sprinkling, the trinity, and Sunday-keeping, the church would now be free from her unscriptural errors. (*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 7, 1856)

Here Elder White includes the doctrine of the trinity with the errors of the papacy and states that if the reformers had kept reforming, the doctrine of the trinity would not be among Protestants. It certainly was not among the Adventists during Elder White’s life, and it did not come into the church until after Sister White’s death.

Have we freed ourselves from the errors and dogmas of the papacy, or are we backsliding by lessening the distance between ourselves and the man of sin—the antichrist—by the acceptance of her foundational doctrine? Beloved, we are told that we should “strive with all the power that God has

given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand. And let us do all that we can to help others to gain heaven” (*The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905). The 144,000 stand faultless, having “no guile” in their mouths, before the throne of God. (Revelation 14:5). They will not be worshipping antichrist, nor will they be teaching the doctrines of antichrist. Jesus is coming back for a pure church, “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

Beloved, will you be ready for the coming of Jesus? Error, especially the foundational error of antichrist, will not prepare you for the coming of Jesus; it will not help you to know the true Christ from the false christ. Only the truth can set you free; only the truth can sanctify you (John 8:32; 17:17).

The challenge for us is simple in fact, but difficult in reality. The answer was simple in the days of Elijah, but most were already so spiritually paralyzed that it was very difficult for the people to find their way back to “the only true God” (John 17:3). They could either continue to worship Baal in any of the various forms which he might take, or they could worship the true God.

Today we can worship the god of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, better known as Pope Benedict XVI, or we can worship the God of James White, Joseph Bates, Ellen White, J. N. Loughborough, J. N. Andrews, Stephen Haskell, and all the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. Elijah said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21a). Let us not sit in silence like Israel: “And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kings 18:21b)

May the God of heaven give us discernment to know truth from error, and then may we be willing to walk in the truth, now and forever.

Allen Stump



Which of these two men would you trust to teach you the truth about God?



Waldensian Center's New Term To Start Soon

Youth's Story

Waldensian Center will be starting its next one year training program on July 4, 2012. Waldensian Center is a modern-day school of the prophets, a Bible college patterned after the Madison School blueprint, giving training in gospel, ministerial, and medical missionary work, combined with training for practical life in various trades and agriculture. It is operated by an association of home churches called Seventh Day Home Church Fellowships.

Areas of study include: agriculture (including conducting and interpreting soil tests); religion (a broad range of biblical subjects, as well as a pastoral externship program); book-keeping; education; health science (anatomy and physiology; natural remedies, including hydrotherapy); history; industrial arts (including an introduction to appliance repair; heating and air conditioning; refrigeration; mechanics; welding; and the various building trades, including electrical and plumbing); languages (biblical and modern); music; and writing. For the ladies there will be practical training in sewing, soap-making, and food preservation.

The full-time staff includes David Sims and Thomas and Raquel Akens. Others will be teaching certain classes, also.

See <http://www.waldensiancenter.org> for further details.

Dear young adults, I would make a special appeal to you. Do you feel called to ministry work or to medical missionary work? Do you desire to serve the Lord in some way, but are not sure where to start or what he would have you do? Would you like to have a good understanding of the Scriptures and be better fitted for serving the Lord, even in a secular occupation? Is it your goal to have practical, all around training for either occupational or practical life? If these questions express your heart's desire, then we encourage you to come to Waldensian Center. We believe you will be richly blessed.

Waldensian Center is looking for a few people who are willing to be trained and to go to Peru to set up a missionary school and then teach in that school. If you are willing to go yourself, or are willing to donate a monthly amount to WC to help provide a stipend for the support of someone to go, please contact us.

David Sims



**Pastor David Sims,
Director of the
Waldensian Center**

Elizabeth Fry's home in England was a lovely mansion that had large, irregular rooms and passages and many cupboards and nooks in which to play. Outside were sunny lawns with apricot and lime trees and a bordering brook. Her childhood was happy and carefree, but when Elizabeth was eighteen, she heard a sermon that changed her life, a sermon about how Jesus wants us to care for the poor and to visit the sick and those in prison. It was a powerful sermon, and for the first time, Elizabeth began to think about what it would be like to be poor, to be sick, or to be in prison. She began to collect clothes for the elderly people who lived near her and to visit those who were confined to their homes, such as the aged and the sick. She had never done this before, but God was speaking to her heart, and she was listening!

Soon Elizabeth married, and she and her husband lived in London and raised eleven children, but in the midst of all these children, Elizabeth never forgot the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. Newgate Prison was in London also, and she decided to visit it. The prison was built in a style known as *architecture terrible*, which meant the building was designed to be foreboding and ugly, to discourage anyone from wanting to enter its gates. There were few windows, and over the entrances, chains were engraved on the walls, all designed to cause fear in the hearts of those who looked at the building. Elizabeth, however, was not afraid, and she obtained permission to visit the ladies' section of the prison. Three hundred women, plus numerous children (children, unfortunately, accompanied their mothers to prison), were squeezed into four little rooms. Since there were few windows in the prison, it was hot in summertime, and the four rooms had a terrible odor. Most of the women and children had no way of obtaining clothing, so many were only half-dressed. The women did all of their cooking and washing in these four crowded rooms. Here, also, they slept on straw wherever space could be found. Only two supervisors were responsible for the women, and two people could not do much to keep everyone content. Elizabeth, however, knew she could help by telling the ladies about the love of God and by helping to provide for their needs.

When she went to visit the ladies, the first time was in 1813, she would find a chair and sit down. Then she would take off her bonnet and begin to read from the Bible. Most of the women weren't pleasant. They said mean things and were unkind to one another. They were not happy to live in four small rooms, so they were grumpy with each other. When Elizabeth came, she liked to read about Jesus: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his

Continued on page 14

Trust in Di



I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.



Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.



**As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
so the LORD is round about his people.**

When the storm comes, we have of holy confidence and we place our hands of Christ the Rock of Ages from storm, from are to wait on a be an ever-present time of need. - I (c



Rest in the LORD, and

Divine Power

*Scene of sore conflict
learned the lesson
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t, our feet on the
e, and we are secure
om tempest. We
ur Lord. Jesus will
ent help in every
Ellen G. White
Selected Messages,
bk., 3, p. 383)*



I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.



The God of my rock; in him will I trust.



wait patiently for him.



**And they shall spring up as among the grass,
as willows by the water courses.**

mouth.” (Isaiah 53:6, 7). The ladies could understand this—they were oppressed and afflicted, and they had gone astray. Elizabeth then might read Psalm 24:3, 4: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” The ladies began to understand that if they wanted to be in heaven with Jesus, they needed to have clean hands and a pure heart. Elizabeth also often read parts of Matthew 5 and Matthew 20. These women had no one to visit them, so when Elizabeth came, they crowded around, and when she had finished reading, they understood a little better that courage, holiness, justice, and strength come from God.

The day after Elizabeth’s first visit, she returned with

clothes for the women and their children, and later, she started a project in the prison for the women. She had been told that the ladies would never get involved in any kind of work, for they were lazy, but Elizabeth brought material for the women to use in creative handiwork, which they did, and their work was then sold. In this way the ladies were able to earn a little money for their needs. Elizabeth also started schools for the children who lived at prison. Elizabeth kept returning and kept reading to the women, and this changed them! Just as Elizabeth had been changed by one sermon she had heard from the word of God, these women were changed as they listened to the word of God!



Elizabeth Fry

Before she visited anyone, either in prison or in her neighborhood, she always prayed, “Lord, help me to feel tenderly and charitably toward all my beloved fellow mortals and to have no soreness or improper feelings toward any. Let me think no evil, bear all things, hope all things, endure all things, and walk in humility and godly fear before all men and in your sight.”

Before long the four rooms of women and children became a well-regulated family. Foul words were replaced with sweet and kind words, all because Elizabeth had been willing to spend time with them.

When Elizabeth learned that a man had frozen to death on one of the streets in London because he had had nowhere to spend the night, she started shelters for the homeless. She also started schools in her community for children who could not afford to attend school. And the work of prison reform

spread! She went to France, Switzerland, Russia, Denmark, Italy, Belgium, and Holland. She and her helpers visited every convict ship leaving England and read and prayed with the women prisoners before they began their long journey to Australia. She became known as the *angel of the prisons*. She also championed the cause of the mentally ill. She did what she could to help the poor, the sick, and those who were in prison, trying always to be faithful to the words of Jesus: “Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”

Elizabeth also started a school for nurses and during the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale took a team of Elizabeth’s nurses with her to the battlefield.

When the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, arrived in England for a state visit, he asked to visit Newgate Prison with Elizabeth Fry. In his presence she read Romans 12 to the prisoners. As she read verse 5, her voice rose to a crescendo: “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” And when she knelt to pray, the king knelt with her. The scene was a moving one—the monarch of a great nation, the dignitaries of England, and the common prisoners all praying to their common Creator. When they arose, the king offered his arm to Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, and together, they left the prison.

Both Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Fry have been called *angels*, one the angel of the Crimean and the other the angel of the prisons, for both ladies sought to relieve suffering. Would that the words of Elizabeth, spoken near the end of her life, should echo our desire: “I have never awakened from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without my first waking thought being how best I might serve the Lord.”

Ornycha Holt

No Sabbath School Comments This Month

Due to several factors we are not publishing comments for the Sabbath School lessons this month.

This quarter’s lessons are on the letters to the Thessalonians, and the first few lessons cover historical and background information that we have found, for the most part, to be helpful. The principal contributor, Jon Paulien, is an accomplished and careful writer.

We hope to resume comments next month, but we urge each believer who attends the denomination’s Sabbath School and who reads the Sabbath School lessons and companion book to carefully study, as a modern-day Berean, these materials.

Partaking of the Divine Nature

“In the second letter addressed by Peter to those who had obtained ‘like precious faith’ with himself, the apostle sets forth the divine plan for the development of Christian character. [2 Peter 1:2–8 quoted]” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 529)

God has granted to each person the precious privilege of being a partaker of the divine nature. In this study we wish to examine the necessity of partaking of the divine nature, as well as the process by which humanity is united with divinity. We will begin with an understanding of the foundation of the process, as outlined by Peter.

Peter begins his epistle by writing, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:1, 2). Here Peter explains that grace and peace come from a knowledge of God. Ellen White states that we need to have a knowledge of God that goes beyond facts and figures:

These precious words are spoken to those who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. In order to realize the greatness of the promise, we must know by experimental knowledge who is back of the promise. “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” [Jeremiah 9:23, 24] (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 258, 259)

What a grand theme this is for contemplation,—the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ! Contemplating Christ and his righteousness, leaves no room for self-righteousness, for the glorifying of self. In this chapter there is no standstill. There is continual advancement in every stage in the knowledge of Christ. Through the knowledge of Christ is life eternal. In his prayer Jesus says, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” In God we are to glory. . . . “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” “Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory

in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.” The testimony of prophets and apostles is in full accord on this subject. We are to glory in the Lord our God. (*The Youth’s Instructor*, October 24, 1895)

Peter says that the believer has been called to glory and virtue and that we have all things needful for life through the knowledge of God. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). Paul calls this a “heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1).

God has called His people to glory and virtue, and these will be manifest in the lives of all who are truly connected with Him. Having become partakers of the heavenly gift, they are to go on unto perfection, being “kept by the power of God through faith.” 1 Peter 1:5. It is the glory of God to give His virtue to His children. He desires to see men and women reaching the highest standard; and when by faith they lay hold of the power of Christ, when they plead His unfailing promises, and claim them as their own, when with an importunity that will not be denied they seek for the power of the Holy Spirit, they will be made complete in Him. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 530)

Progress Is Step-by-Step

In 2 Peter 1:4, Peter introduces the expression *divine nature*. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” This is the only place in the Bible where this term is found. Whatever it means and however one obtains this “divine nature,” it does not come without having Christ.

With Christ working in the believer’s life, change, even radical change, happens. The believer is no longer under the control of evil, but with Christ within and by partaking of the divine nature, the believer may walk in paths of righteousness. Paul notes:

And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Galatians 5:24)

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. (Titus 2:11, 12)

Please note that this godly living begins now, “in this present world.” The believer does not have to wait for Jesus to come to change him because he has already been changed by

being a partaker of the divine nature. This process is not instantaneous, though. It is a step-by-step process.

Paul instructs us that as we speak “the truth in love, [we] may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:15). The Spirit of Prophecy also states:

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man’s sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 532)

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.

None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their nature. They have put no confidence in the flesh, have claimed no righteousness of their own, but have trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ.

So will it be with all who behold Christ. The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone and shall make the apostle’s confession our own: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Romans 7:18; Galatians 6:14. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561)

The common thread in all these references is the empowering Christ. Through faith in him, we are empowered to reach up to a holier life.

Faith is the key that opens the door to Jesus. The importance of faith is simply stated: “But without faith it is

impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith is the first round in the ladder of advancement. Without faith it is impossible to please God. But many stop on this round, and never ascend higher. They seem to think that when they have professed Christ, when their names are on the church record, their work is completed. Faith is essential; but the inspired word says, “Add to your faith, virtue.” Those who are seeking for eternal life, and a home in the kingdom of God, must lay for their character building the foundation of virtue. Jesus must be the chief corner stone. The things that defile the soul must be banished from the mind and life. When temptations are presented, they must be resisted in the strength of Christ. The virtue of the spotless Lamb of God must be woven into the character till the soul can stand in its integrity. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.” (*The Review and Herald*, February 21, 1888)

The faith that we may possess is the faith of Jesus. Galatians 2:16 states, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Note that Paul says that those who believe in Jesus have the faith of Jesus. When one surrenders to Jesus Christ, Jesus comes to dwell with the believer, and so, the faith of Jesus is lived out in the one who believes in Jesus.

Peter continues to give the natural progression of growth for the one who has the faith of Jesus, as he is a partaker of the divine nature:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. (2 Peter 1:5–7)

Commenting upon these verses, the Spirit of Prophecy notes:

These words are full of instruction, and strike the keynote of victory. The apostle presents before the believers the ladder of Christian progress, every step of which represents advancement in the knowledge of God, and in the climbing of which there is to be no standstill. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are the rounds of the ladder. We are saved by climbing round after round, mounting step after step, to the height of Christ’s ideal for us. Thus He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 530)

While knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are important, there is also a need for courage and strength by God’s end-time people.

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13) or, as the NKJV translates this verse, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” Courage is emphasized in Christ’s command to Joshua:

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. (Joshua 1:9)

Commenting at length upon this, Ellen White has some thoughtful and insightful words:

Christian life is more than many take it to be. It does not consist wholly in gentleness, patience, meekness, and kindness. These graces are essential; but *there is need also of courage, force, energy, and perseverance*. The path that Christ marks out is a narrow, self-denying path. To enter that path and press on through difficulties and discouragements requires men who are more than weaklings.

Men of stamina are wanted, *men who will not wait to have their way smoothed and every obstacle removed*, men who will inspire with fresh zeal the flagging efforts of dispirited workers, men whose hearts are warm with Christian love and whose hands are strong to do their Master’s work.

Some who engage in missionary service are weak, nerveless, spiritless, easily discouraged. *They lack push*. They have not those positive traits of character that give power to do something—the spirit and energy that kindle enthusiasm. Those who would win success must be courageous and hopeful. *They should cultivate not only the passive but the active virtues. While they are to give the soft answer that turns away wrath, they must possess the courage of a hero to resist evil. With the charity that endures all things, they need the force of character that will make their influence a positive power.* (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 497; all emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted)

A dishcloth handshake—a handshake that is limp like a dishcloth—is certainly not a handshake of Christian character, for it usually is accompanied by a lack of drive and by a lack of the “active virtues.” God is calling today for men and women who will boldly and quickly move to the front, when the call goes out, *Who is for the Lord’s side?!*

Few people have exhibited a character as that of President Theodore Roosevelt. He certainly believed in the strenuous life. As a young child he was taught by his father that a man’s worth was not in his possessions, but in his character. In his short life of sixty years, he accomplished more than most could in one hundred years. He did this, in part, because he attempted much, even when others *knew* he would fail, but as Roosevelt said:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man

who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat. (Excerpt from “Citizenship in a Republic,” a speech delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, April 23, 1910)

Knowledge from God

To be a partaker of the divine nature, we must have a knowledge of God, the source of all knowledge. “For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6). This includes all knowledge and wisdom, be it science, literature, art, etc.

Titles, such as doctor of philosophy and medical doctor, often bring pride to the one invested with such a title. One may know the principles of relativity and other complex subjects, but according to God’s word, there is only one true knowledge in which we may glory, and that knowledge is the truth about God and his Son!

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23, 24)

In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. (*Education*, p. 14)

Shortly after Dr. John H. Kellogg wrote his book *The Living Temple* (published in 1903), a great controversy arose over theological expressions in it concerning the nature of God. While containing the most up-to-date medical information for its time, the book crossed over into theology, with disastrous results. The publication of this book and the effects it carried required action. Ellen White rose to meet the challenge by writing several testimonies. She also wrote a chapter in her upcoming book *The Ministry of Healing* that detailed the importance of knowing God aright. Chapter 35 is entitled “A True Knowledge of God” and begins:

Like our Saviour, we are in this world to do service for God. We are here to become like God in character, and by a life of service to reveal Him to the world. In order to be co-workers with God, in order to become like Him and to reveal His character, we must know Him aright. We must know Him as He reveals Himself

A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation. It is this alone that can make us like God in character.

This is the knowledge needed by all who are working for the uplifting of their fellow men. Transformation of character, purity of life, efficiency in service, adherence to correct principles, all depend upon a right knowledge of God. This knowledge is the essential preparation both for this life and for the life to come. (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 409)

Adventists, like many other religious groups, have some language and phrases that are perfectly understood within their boundaries but are not comprehended outside their camp. Adventists talk about *the cause, an effort, the work, and the three angels' messages*, and we all know what is being discussed. We speak of *the truth* and the need that the world has for *the truth*. While many truths are found in the Bible, Paul, in writing to Timothy, focused on the one central, core truth of the Bible: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3, 4). What is that knowledge of truth into which we are to come and which God desires all men and women to accept? Verse 5 tells us: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Foundational to all truth is the fact that there is only one true God. Jesus, praying to his Father, said: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Coupled with this is the truth that Jesus is God's only begotten Son which qualifies him to be our mediator.

God could have left man to die, or worse, he could have allowed him to live in the misery of sin forever, but instead, he gives us the privilege of being a partaker of the divine nature. Since we do not ascend to this position in a moment or in a day, he has graciously given us a lifetime to accomplish this task. As we venture out in faith of God's word, we are sure to find many battles along the way, but the victory will be ours! Let us press forward for the good of the cause, fearless of the future, unheeding of our individual needs, with unflinching hearts and with undimmed eyes, for we stand at the threshold of eternity and for we battle for the Lord. Soon the prophecy of Habakkuk 2:14 will be a reality: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

As we continue our study of partaking of the divine nature, we now seek to ascertain if we can define just what the

divine nature is and how we obtain it. Divine is that which pertains to God, but what does the concept of *nature* entail? The dictionary defines nature as:

1 the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations: the breathtaking beauty of nature.

the physical force regarded as causing and regulating these phenomena: it is impossible to change the laws of nature. See also Mother Nature.

2 [in sing.] the basic or inherent features of something, esp. when seen as characteristic of it: helping them to realize the nature of their problems | there are a lot of other documents of that nature.

the innate or essential qualities or character of a person or animal: it's not in her nature to listen to advice | I'm not violent by nature . See also human nature.

inborn or hereditary characteristics as an influence on or determinant of personality. Often contrasted with nurture. (*Oxford American Dictionary*)

The second definition in the above list is the one that most closely relates to our study, but how can finite minds define or, even, begin to grasp "the innate or essential qualities" of divinity? For that matter, what is human nature, and how can we define it? Interestingly, one biblical dictionary states:

There are few words more dangerously ambiguous than "nature." (*New Bible dictionary*, 3rd ed., p. 807)

Dangerously ambiguous! Do you understand what this is saying? It means that even the theologians cannot safely put a definition upon the concept of nature. Perhaps this is why we have been counseled:

Let not finite man attempt to interpret Him. Let none indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 279)

The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 52)

Maybe you are familiar with this statement from *The Acts of the Apostles*. It does not say the *identity* of the Holy Spirit is a mystery, but rather, the *nature* of the Holy Spirit, and this men cannot explain, for it is beyond their comprehension. This parallels our first quotation, where we are told "not to indulge in speculation regarding His [God's] nature." In neither of these statements are we advised to stop studying about the Holy Spirit, nor are we advised to quit seeking after God, but we are counseled to stay away from trying to understand the nature of the divine one.

Because we acknowledge our limitations and our failure to understand the nature of God, or the divine nature, we will not attempt to go beyond what inspiration has revealed. Yet there are glimpses of God in scripture that are understandable and needful; therefore, we want to continue now with an analysis on the words translated *nature*, *natural*, and *naturally* in the Bible (KJV).

To begin our study let us examine some of the root words that are translated into the words mentioned above.

Our first word is *leah*, a Hebrew word rendered *natural force* in Deuteronomy 34:7. “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” *Leah* has, in its root form, the idea of freshness, moistness, and the vigor usually associated with the suppleness of youth.

The second word is the Greek adverb *gnesios*. The noun stem, *genesis*, is from a root indicating birth or a coming into being. The adverb form, although rendered *naturally* in Philippians 2:20 (KJV), might be better translated *genuinely*, as it is in the ESV and RSV. The noun form, *genesis*, occurs in the genitive (possessive) case in James 1:23 and 3:6. James 1:23 states: “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his *natural* face in a glass.” In the this text the KJV renders the genitive form by “natural” and in James 3:6, it is rendered by “of nature.” The idea is that of the succession of the birth, decay, and new birth characteristic of the world around us. A man sees in a mirror the face which has come to be through this process.

James 3:6 says, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” This verse further brings out the sense of continuous process by the phrase *the course* (or the wheel—Greek *trochos*) of the changing world.

The next word, translated *natural* in 1 Corinthians 2:14; 15:44, 46 (KJV), is the Greek word *psychikos* from *psyche*, the word for soul.

But the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

It is sown a *natural* body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . . Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is *natural*; and afterward that which is spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15:44, 46)

This adjective is used in the New Testament to refer to that which belongs to the *psyche*, not in the most general sense of life or soul, but as it is distinguished from *pneuma* (spirit). *Psyche*, in this sense, is the life of sensation, emotion, intellect, apart from all conscious contact with God. The natural body of 1 Corinthians 15 is a body which answers to the needs of this lower *psyche*; similarly, the spiritual body,

otherwise undefined, will be a body, not some floating spirit, but a fit vessel for the functioning of the spirit.

The last words we will look at are the ones most frequently translated *nature* and *natural*—*physis* and *physikos*, from which we get our English word *physics*—“the branch of science concerned with *the nature* and properties of matter and energy. The subject matter of physics, distinguished from that of chemistry and biology, includes mechanics, heat, light and other radiation, sound, electricity, magnetism, and the structure of atoms” (*Oxford American Dictionary*). The basic meaning of physics in the Greek is the process of growth and, hence, that which comes into being by such a process. Romans 11:21, which states “for if God spared not the *natural* branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee,” illustrates the normal growth of a plant; while Romans 11:24, which states “for if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to *nature* into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree,” illustrates the results of grafting. Every order of beings has its own *physis*, or kind, as James 3:7 states.

Interestingly, it is even possible to speak of the distinctive *physis* of God. The text we have been considering, 2 Peter 1:4, which states “whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine *nature* (*physis*), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” is the only verse that uses the term *divine nature*. Certainly, though, no process of growth is conceivable for God, for he is already infinite.

The precise meaning of *physis* is often determined by that with which *physis* is contrasted. Thus it may be regarded as characteristic of brute beasts, when opposed to humanity (2 Peter 2:9–12 and Jude 1:7–10 use *physikos*). *Physis* may also be contrasted with that which is commonly, but falsely, believed (Galatians 4:8, Moffatt—“gods who are really, no gods at all”; see also 1 Corinthians 8:5).

Of special importance are Paul’s uses of *physis* in contrast with the perversions of Gentile society and the free grace of God in Christ and its consequences in man’s life. Galatians 2:15 says, “We who are Jews by nature (*physis*), and not sinners of the Gentiles.” Here the Jew’s nature gives him or her a place of comparative privilege, for it marks this person off from the Gentile who is outside the covenant (Romans 11:21, 24), though it does not, of itself, save.

Romans 2:14, 27 are two more verses that highlight a contrast:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. (Romans 2:14)

And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? (Romans 2:27)

Here we see the Gentile, despite not having the sign of the covenant and despite being out of nature (*ek physeos*) from

God (uncircumcised) is sometimes able (*physei*) to do the works demanded by the law.

Finally, Ephesians 2:3 declares: “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by *nature* the children of wrath, even as others.” Over against all privilege or good works, however, stands the fact that all men are *physei* (dative, indirect object), the children of wrath. Thus *physis* and *physikos* in these passages refer to all that belongs to the state of the world, Jewish and Gentile, apart from God’s gracious act in Christ.

We finish this segment of our study with some pertinent comments from Sister White about receiving the divine nature and about the importance of receiving it.

Divine Nature Comes by Faith

He who is converted to the truth, *through faith made a partaker of the divine nature*, is set apart to do the work of him who gave his life for the life of the world. . . . He is made a partaker of Christ’s sufferings and of his great love, and he becomes a part of his working force for the saving of sinners. (*The Review and Herald*, February 4, 1904)

The divine nature is imparted to those who receive and acknowledge him as their Saviour. They become partakers of the divine nature, overcoming the assaults of Satan and escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. Christ energizes by his Spirit those who seek him with the whole heart. (*The Review and Herald*, August 31, 1905)

Receiving the Divine Nature Is Our Only Hope

To lay hold by faith upon Christ, *to become a partaker of the divine nature, is the sinner’s only hope*. Through the efficacy of the atonement made, man may return to his allegiance. Through accepting the righteousness of Christ, he may become loyal to the law of God, united to the Father and the Son. (*The Review and Herald*, May 3, 1906)

The question with men and women gazing heavenward is How can *I obtain the mansions for the blessed? It is by being a partaker of the divine nature*. It is by escaping the “corruption that is in the world through lust.” It is by entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, laying hold of the hope set before you in the gospel. . . . It is by being in Christ and yet led by Christ, by believing and working—trusting in Jesus, yet working upon the plan of addition, holding on to Christ and constantly mounting upward toward God. . . . (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 88)

To Every Follower

He took upon Himself humanity, that He might perfect in His own life a humanity that we can lay hold of and be united with divinity. *The divine nature is to be imparted to every true seeker after Jesus Christ*. Divinity must be united with humanity. Thus humanity may be partakers of the divine nature, that men may be able to escape the cor-

ruption that is in the world through lust. (*Sermons and Talks*, bk. 2, p. 294)

Overcome through the Divine Nature

Every soul who is a partaker of the divine nature is an overcomer in His [Christ’s] own behalf, and is victorious, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (*The 1888 Materials*, p. 138)

The Saviour took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity and lived a sinless life, that men might have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they could not overcome. Christ came to make us “partakers of the divine nature,” and *His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin*. (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 180)

By transgression the world had been divorced from heaven. Christ bridged the gulf and connected earth with heaven. In human nature He maintained the purity of His divine character. He lived the law of God, and honored it in a world of transgression, revealing to the worlds unfallen, to the heavenly universe, to Satan, and to all the fallen sons and daughters of Adam that through His grace humanity can keep the law of God! *He came to impart His own divine nature, His own image, to the repentant, believing soul*.—Manuscript 20, 1898 (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, pp. 39–41).

There is such a thing as being partakers of the divine nature. We shall be tempted in a variety of ways, but when we are tempted we need to remember that a provision has been made whereby we may overcome. . . . *Those who truly believe in Christ are made partakers of the divine nature and have power that they can appropriate under every temptation*. They will not fall under temptation and be left to defeat. In time of trial they will claim the promises and by these escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust. (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 197)

Can Be One with God

God gave His only begotten Son to the human race, that people might become partakers of the divine nature by accepting the remedy for sin and allowing the divine grace of Christ to work in their lives. . . . Fallen humans, *by laying hold of the divine power brought within their reach, can become one with God*. Everlasting life is the blessing that Christ came to give to the world. (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 32)

My brethren, all this coldness, this hardness of heart, must be put away. When the gold of love is sought for, when the divine nature is imparted to you, men will see a love which is impartial, pure, elevated, and fervent, and the fruits of pure and undefiled religion will appear. To manifest affection in kindly words, in acts of tender consideration, will not then be looked upon as weak and unmanly, but brethren will press together, and bear testi-

mony to the world that the religion of Christ is of divine origin. (*The Review and Herald*, June 30, 1891)

Perhaps you have heard the nursery rhyme:

Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
I've been down to London to visit the Queen.
Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you there?
I frightened a little mouse, under her chair.

There are many things to see in London—the London Bridge, Buckingham Palace, and the changing of the guard at the palace, to name just a few. Recently the Queen celebrated her diamond jubilee, with much fanfare, but what did the cat see? A little mouse under the chair of the queen. Why did the cat see the little mouse? That is what cats look for. They do this, we say, by nature! It is part of their nature.

Fallen sinful humanity also has a nature that naturally falls toward sin and sinful ways. Jeremiah 13:23 declares: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” The implied answer is that we cannot, of ourselves, do anything good, but rather, only evil.

We need a power outside of ourselves to help us so that we may do the good the Bible tells us about. The only way we may be a partaker of this power is to have the source of all power in our lives. This can only come when we are born again. When we are born again, we partake of the divine nature.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, *Ye must be born again.* (John 3:1–7)

God wants to take away our stony hearts and give us hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:22–30).

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, he means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride. (*The Youth's Instructor*, September 26, 1901)

Believing in Jesus as his personal Saviour, accepting of his righteousness by faith, the sinner becomes a partaker of the divine nature, and escapes the corruption that is in the world through lust. It is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that the Christian is enabled to resist temptation and to work righteousness. Without the divine nature, without the influence of the Spirit of God, man cannot work out his own salvation; for God must work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. Christ has said, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” (*Messenger*, April 26, 1893)

If anyone could have bragged about his seemingly wonderful personal spiritual attainment, it would have been Paul. In the first part of Philippians 3, he states his pedigree, but then declares it all to be dung that he might win Christ (v. 8). He then goes on to say:

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. (Philippians 3:9, 10)

We are partakers of the divine nature through the precious promises and by the lively hope of the resurrection (2 Peter 1:3, 4). Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Thus we see that the Scriptures are the great agency of change of life, of the new birth.

In Part 2 of this study, we noted that “there are few words more dangerously ambiguous than ‘nature’” (*New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., p. 807). We also noted that silence is eloquent when attempting to understand the nature of God.

The meaning of the word *divine*, as used in 1 Peter 1:4, is:

‘to share in the very being of God,’ one may speak of ‘to share in what God is like’ or ‘to become in a measure like God.’ It is important, of course, to avoid the implication that people can become completely God. (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.)

As Charles Spurgeon noted in his devotional book *Morning and Evening*:

To be a partaker of the divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The essence of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence; but as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are made in the image of the Most High, and are partakers of the divine nature. We are, by grace, made like God. “God is love”; we become love—“He that loveth is born of God.” God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true: God is good, and he makes us good by his grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. (*Morning and Evening*, reading for the morning of September 16)

We are to be partakers of the divine nature, but we are not to think it is from something within us. Jesus said that without him we can do nothing (John 15:5)!

By coming to Christ just as we are, needy, helpless, dependent. He died to make it possible for us to be partakers of the divine nature. He took humanity upon himself that he might reach humanity. With the golden chain of his matchless love he has bound us to the throne of God. We are to have power to overcome as he overcame. (*The Review and Herald*, April 14, 1904)

The sinner may come to Jesus just as he is. Jesus has extended the invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). God is calling the sinner away from the world, with its cares and burdens, and to be lifted high towards heaven.

God’s law is the echo of His voice, saying to us, “Holier, yes, holier still.” Desire the fulness of the grace of Christ; yea, long—hunger and thirst—after righteousness. The promise is, “Ye shall be filled.” God has plainly stated that He expects us to be perfect, and because He requires this, He has made provision that we may be made partakers of the divine nature. Only thus can we be partakers of the divine nature. Only thus can we gain perfection. The power is given by Christ. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” (*The Signs of the Times*, March 30, 1904)

Divine—Godhead

We should now examine the three places the term *godhead* is used the Bible to see how this term should properly be understood in connection to receiving the divine nature.

Sometimes godhead is defined to mean the trinity, or maybe God the Father, who some believe is the *first among equals* in the trinity. The first usage is found in Romans 1:20, where Paul writes:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and *Godhead*, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

The Greek word translated *Godhead* is *theiotes*, from the Greek word *theios* which is from *theos* (God). *Theiotes* simply means to be God-like or to have the nature of God. The ESV translates Romans 1:20 to say:

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and *divine nature*, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

The term *Godhead* is also found in Acts 17:29, where Paul speaks to the Athenians who had erected a monument to an unknown God:

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. (Acts 17:29)

The term *godhead* is translated *divine being* in the ESV and *divine nature* in the NKJV.

This God, whom Paul called “deity,” is not far from any of us, human beings. Paul proclaimed that God has placed within each one of us the sense to worship and seek Him. We grope for Him by creating images to worship—whether it be a piece of stone or personal pleasures. Without revelation from God, we would always be worshipping an unknown God. Paul’s whole point is that God is not far away. He wants to fellowship with us. In fact, every day we are absolutely dependent upon him for our existence (see Acts 17:22–33). (*Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained*, p. 268)

The third place the term *Godhead* is used is Colossians 2:9, “For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” In this text *Godhead* has been translated as *deity*, in the ESV, NIV, and NASB and as *God’s nature* in the HCSB.

While unbelievers should recognize God’s divinity or divine nature through the things he has created, believers have the privilege of partaking of the divine nature and power, as we have seen in 2 Peter 1:3–5. The divine power is the power God used in raising Christ from the dead, and that same power is available to the church (Ephesians 1:19–20). This divine power has provided us with the spiritual energy to live a godly, sanctified life. The divine nature is simply the nature that characterizes God—the nature that is expressed in holiness, virtue, righteousness, love, and grace (see 2 Peter 1:5–7). By being regenerated with the divine nature through the new birth experience, believers can have these same characteristics in their lives. This is partaking of the divine nature.

Any failure to live a godly life is certainly not due to a lack of power on God’s part, but is due to our unwillingness to yoke up with God and Christ, the source of all strength. According to Peter this power is given to us as our experiential knowledge of God and Jesus increases.

The great blessings of partaking of the divine nature have been revealed to us through the Spirit of Prophecy:

Christ suffered all this that he might obtain your salvation, and mine. By his life of sacrifice and death of shame, he has made it possible for us to take hold of divinity, and to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. There is a battle going on between the powers of darkness and the children of light,—a battle that means humiliation of self at every step. Where are those who will stand? There are some who will. Where are those who understand what it means to be partakers of the divine nature, and to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust? If you are partakers of the divine nature, you will day by day be obtaining a fitting for the life that measures with the life

of God. Day by day you will purify your trust in Jesus and follow his example, growing into his likeness until you shall stand before him perfected. (*The Review and Herald*, January 14, 1909)

We would like to now finish this study with some inspired statements that will help to clarify some remaining points. First, let us notice that we may obtain a new nature:

The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted *their old nature to be broken up*. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 411)

Begotten again unto a lively hope, imbued with *the quickening power of a new nature*, the soul is enabled to rise higher and still higher. [Ephesians 3:16–19 quoted]. (*The Signs of the Times*, October 3, 1900)

This new nature is received as we behold Jesus as the Son of God. It does not come any other way:

The sanctification of the soul is accomplished through steadfastly beholding Him [Christ] by faith as the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. The power of truth is to transform heart and character. Its effect is not like a dash of color here and there upon the canvas; the whole character is to be transformed, the image of Christ is to be revealed in words and actions. *A new nature is imparted*. Man is renewed after the image of Christ in righteousness and true holiness. (Letter 2a, 1892 (Written November 5, 1892, from Adelaide, South Australia, to "Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank and Hattie [Belden].") (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1117)

Through this new nature we are molded into the image of Jesus Christ:

The grand truths of the Bible are for us individually, to rule, to guide, to control our life, for this is the only way in which Christ can be properly represented to our world in grace and loveliness in the characters of all who profess to be His disciples. Nothing less than heart service will be acceptable with God. God requires the sanctification of the entire man, body, soul, and spirit. The Holy Spirit implants *a new nature, and molds through the grace of Christ the human character, until the image of Christ is perfected*. This is true holiness. (*The Upward Look*, p. 27)

We noticed that the old nature is to be broken up, but we are also told it must be put to death:

Self—the old disobedient nature—must be crucified, and Christ must take up His abode in the heart. Thus the human agent is born again, with a new nature. (*The Signs of the Times*, July 26, 1905)

Yet, Paul noted that he had to die daily (1 Corinthians 15:31). Self has a way of coming to life anew each day, and there must be continual warfare against it because it is not given up at conversion:

Our lifework now should be to prepare for eternity. We know not how soon our lifework here may close, and how essential that our low, *sinful nature should be overcome*, and we conform to the image of Christ. We have not one moment's time to squander. We need to be daily preparing for eternity. (*This Day with God*, p. 117)

We are told the sinful nature must be overcome and that it can be overcome through Christ, but that does not mean we overcome by having the sinful nature removed. No, not at all. We must overcome the sinful nature by partaking of the divine nature. This is the example that Jesus left us, an example that, by his grace, we may follow:

Christ says, My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me away from the byways of sin. As Christ worked, so you are to work. In tenderness and love seek to lead the erring to the right way. This will call for great patience and forbearance, and for the constant manifestation of the forgiving love of Christ. Daily the Saviour's compassion must be revealed. The example He has left must be followed. *He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature*, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted. (*Medical Ministry*, p. 181)

Here Ellen White is careful with her words. She does not say that Jesus *had* a sinful nature. She says that Jesus "took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature." In doing this he lived as we may live, by combining divinity with humanity. Paul writes that "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). This is our privilege, beloved, that through conversion—the new birth—we may partake of the divine nature and be one with Christ, as we receive a new heart from him. Have you given your heart fully and completely to God? If not, today is the day of salvation. Do not wait for tomorrow, for only God knows if you shall even be alive tomorrow. Coming to Jesus is simple. He longs for you to kneel at his feet, to confess your sins, and to accept his righteousness in the place of your filthy rags of sin. You will never find a better, or more trusted, friend than Jesus. "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8).

Allen Stump

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Old Paths is a free monthly newsletter/study-paper published by Smyrna Gospel Ministries, HC 64 Box 128–B, Welch, WV 24801–9606 U. S. A. The paper is dedicated to the propagation and restoration of the principles of truth that God gave to the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. *Duplication is not only permitted, but strongly encouraged.* This issue, with other gospel literature we publish, can be found at our web sites. The urls are: <http://www.smyrna.org> and <http://www.presenttruth.info>. Phone: (304) 732–9204. Fax: (304) 732–7322.

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