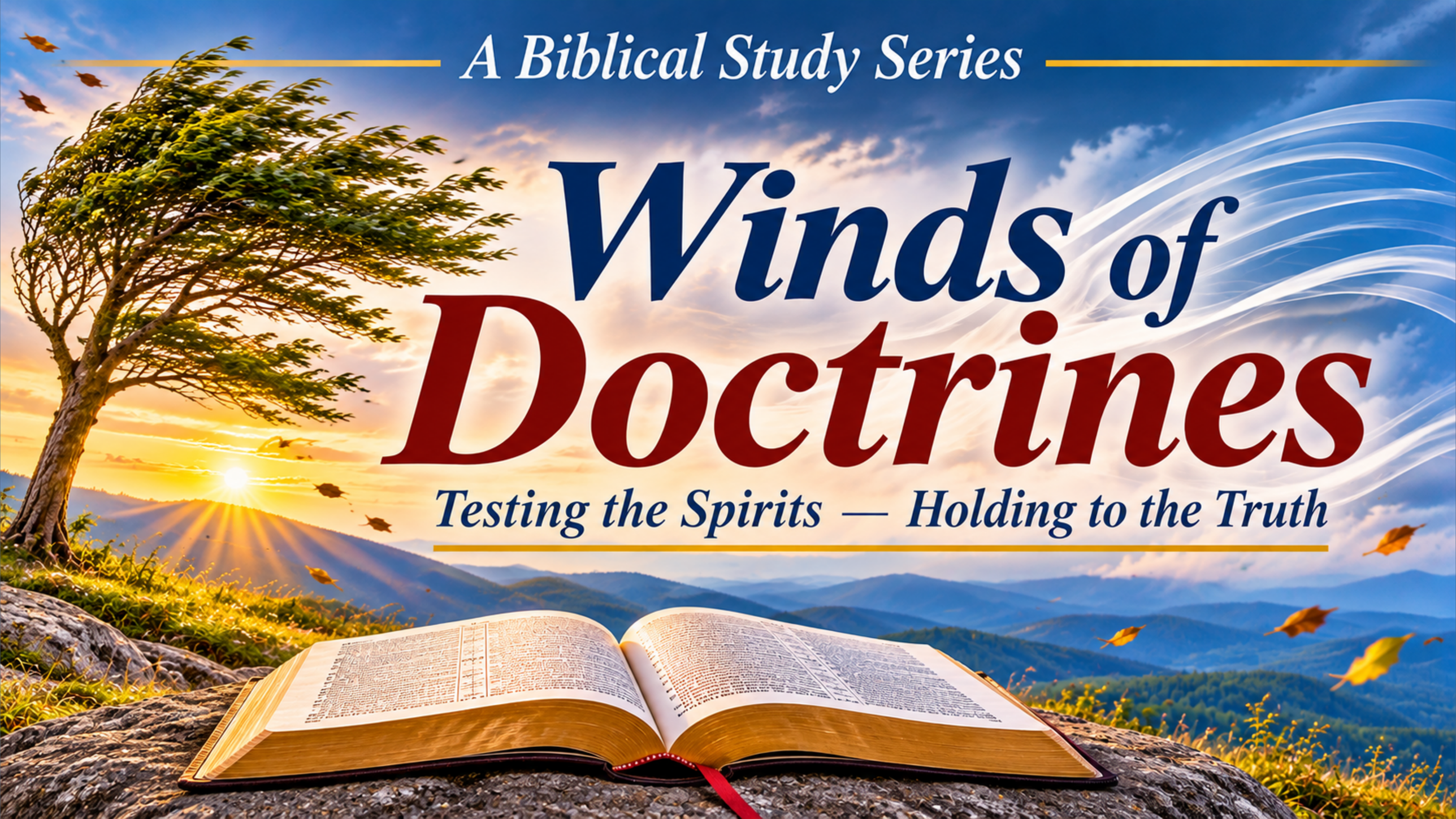
A Biblical Study Series

Winds of Doctrines

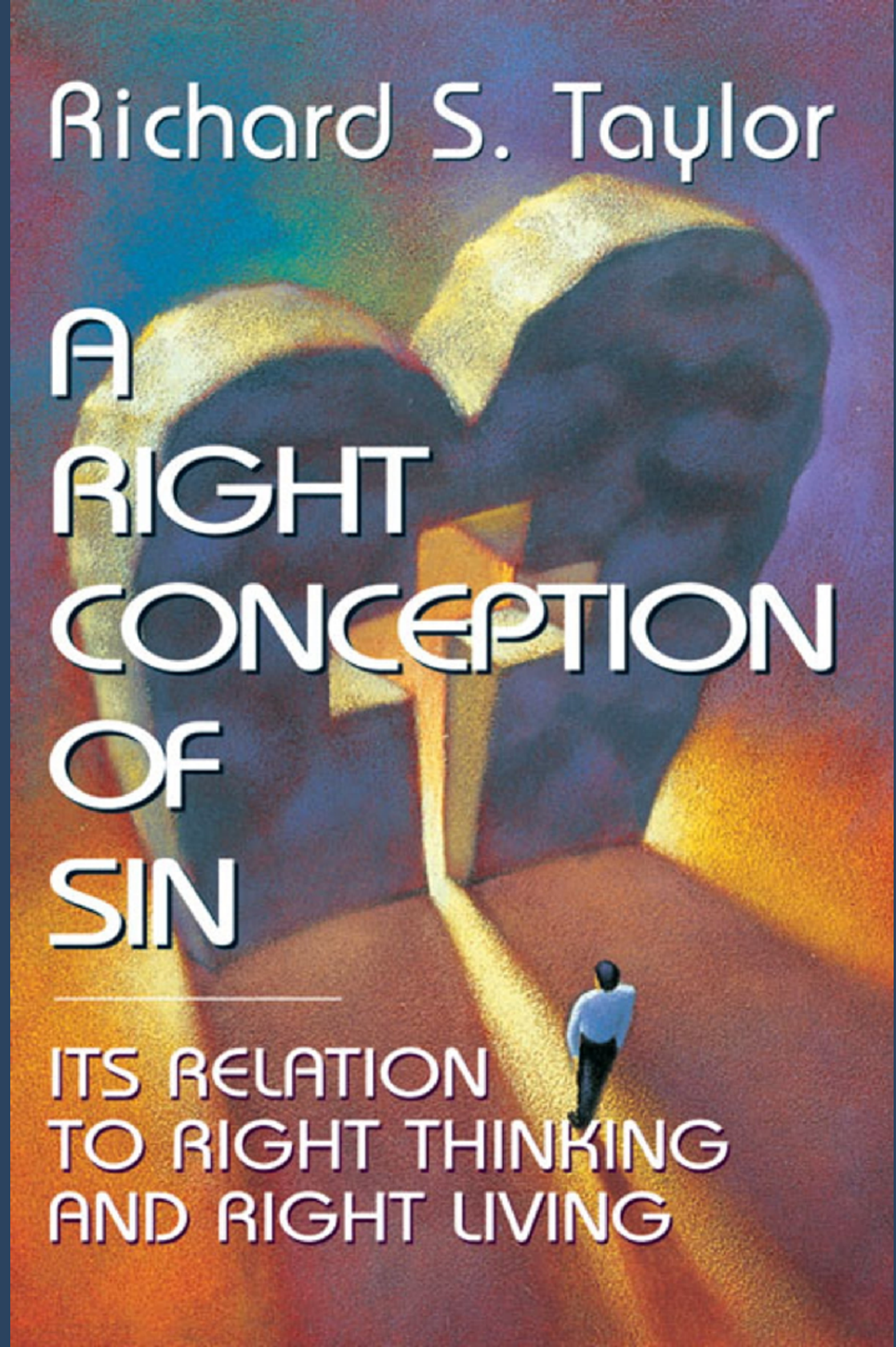
Testing the Spirits — Holding to the Truth



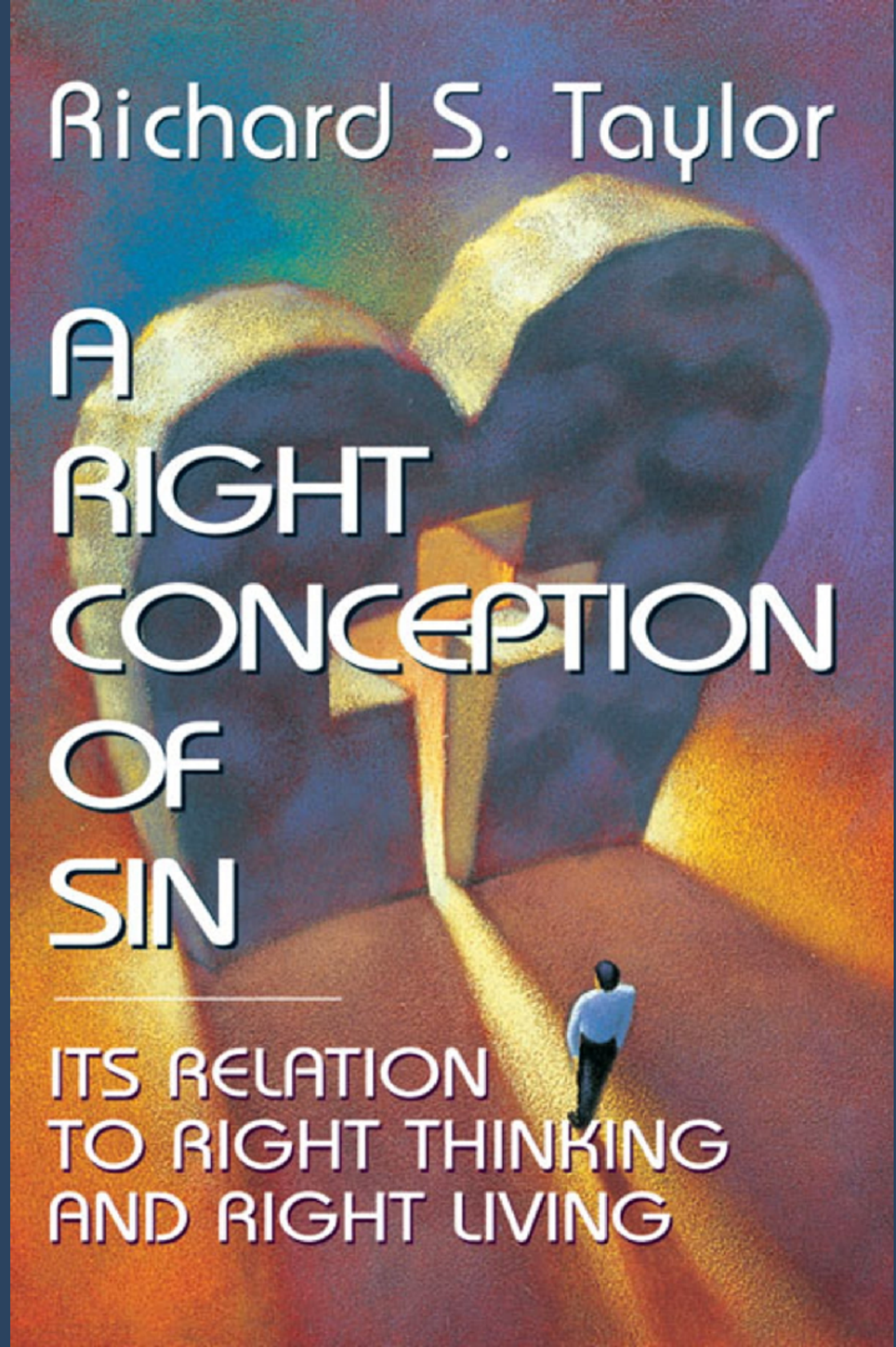
The Doctrine of Sin

The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 423.1)

Sin . . . is the one doctrine by which all others can be reduced to their simplest significance. . . . it forms the surest and most logical measuring stick by which the accuracy of those doctrines can be detected.



The doctrines relating to sin form the center around which we build our entire theological system. If our conception of sin is faulty, our whole belief system will be one error built upon another each one worse. (Richard Taylor, *A Right Conception of Sin*, p. 9)



Those who have permitted their minds to become beclouded in regard to what constitutes sin are fearfully deceived. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 267.1)

Tower of Pisa



Tower of Pisa

Leans out

4 meters (~14 ft).





John Calvin

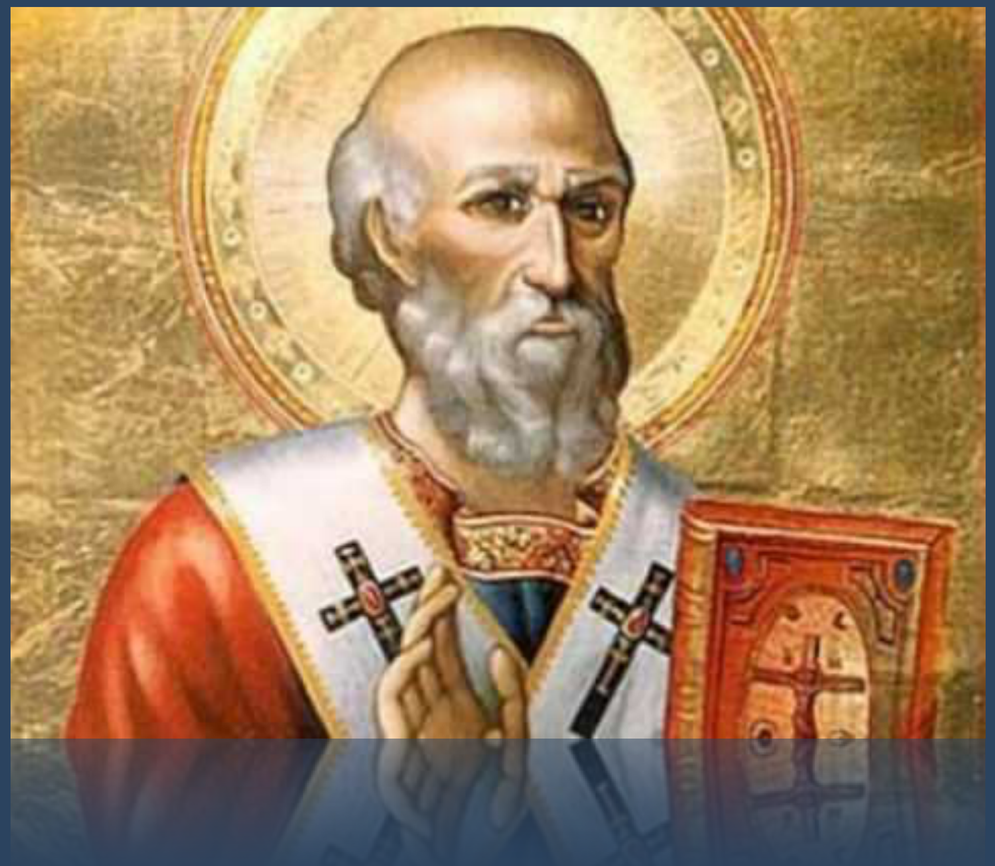


Jacob Arminius

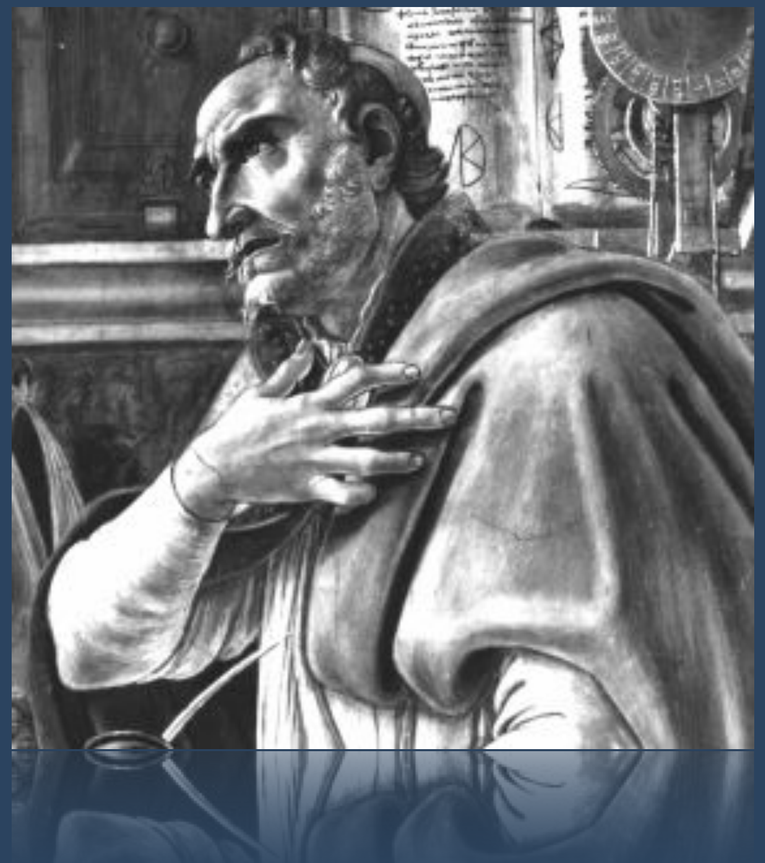
Psalm 99:9 (KJV) — 9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

Isaiah 59:2 (KJV) — 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, "What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim?" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 27)



Athanasius (AD 293–373)



Augustine (AD 354–430)

Christ's was a sinless sacrifice—it had to be, as prefigured in type. Sin, whether in His nature or in act, would have disqualified Him from being our substitute. For He would have needed a substitute Himself.

Model or Substitute?

DOES IT MATTER HOW WE SEE JESUS?

PART 4

In the previous segment, the author showed how Christ could be our example *while being sinless from His birth. Here, in a change of focus, he discusses Jesus in His role as* substitute. *Fourth in a six-part series.*



Christ's was a sinless sacrifice—it had to be, as prefigured in type. Sin, whether in His nature or in act, would have disqualified Him from being our substitute. For He would have needed a substitute Himself.

At Calvary we find the greatest revelation of Christ as both substitute and example. In submission as man to God, He is our example; but in *saving men as God,* He is our substitute. Note how His example transcends anything we can duplicate, extending as it does to His substitution. As all of us might do, "He submitted, but, oh! He felt the bitterness as no other being could feel it." [1]

It was here at the cross that He ultimately bore our sins. He became sin for us—vicariously, in *mission at death* rather than in *nature at birth.* "Every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary." [2] This statement from Ellen G. White places emphasis on the climax of Christ's mission above every other phase of His life. It is the cross that opened the eyes of the universe, and forever holds our commitment to God.[3] In fact, throughout eternity "both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song." [4]

Nowhere do inspired sources make the birth of Christ as prominent as His death. Just look at the space given in the Gospels to the last week of Christ's life, compared with the space given to His birth. In fact, the Gospels devote about a third of their space to the Passion Week. Should not those who are preoccupied with His birth take pause and look beyond to the cross? For throughout unnumbered worlds and through unending time the study of Christ will be cross-centered.

Sin for Us

At the cross "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV). Christ carried the only credentials to become man's sinless sacrificial substitute. Sinless in nature, sinless in life—both were demanded by the law. For man owed a great debt—a debt he could not pay himself. He needed a substitute—a human substitute, a *sinless* human substitute. So God became a man, and as man, Christ paid the debt in full.

Only man could die, so Jesus had to become human. But His death could redeem the planet only because He was also divine. Through His infinite suffering He provided an example for man, and through His infinite sacrifice He provided substitution.

Some believe that Jesus had to be exactly like us in fallen nature in order to span the gulf gouged out by sin. Yet even that identity has a qualification—for none other comes into the world "born of God." If we must credit His humanity as being like ours through Mary, we must not overlook the fact that His humanity has a divine root, too—He was born of the Holy Spirit, as well as through Mary.

Vicariously He bore the sins of the world. As the Sin-bearer, the sacrificial Lamb, "He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature." [5] "On Calvary's cross the weight of the sins of the world rested upon His soul. He received in His bosom the arrow of lost humanity." [6] "The gulf that was made by sin has been spanned by the cross of Calvary." [7] So He didn't completely bridge the abyss between God and man in His nature at birth, but He did in His mission at death.

In the wilderness Israel suffered the serpent's deadly sting. Their only hope was to look upon the brazen serpent uplifted before them. " 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,' even so was the Son of man 'lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life' (John 3:14, 15)" [8] "As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' was to be their Redeemer (Rom. 8:3)." [9]

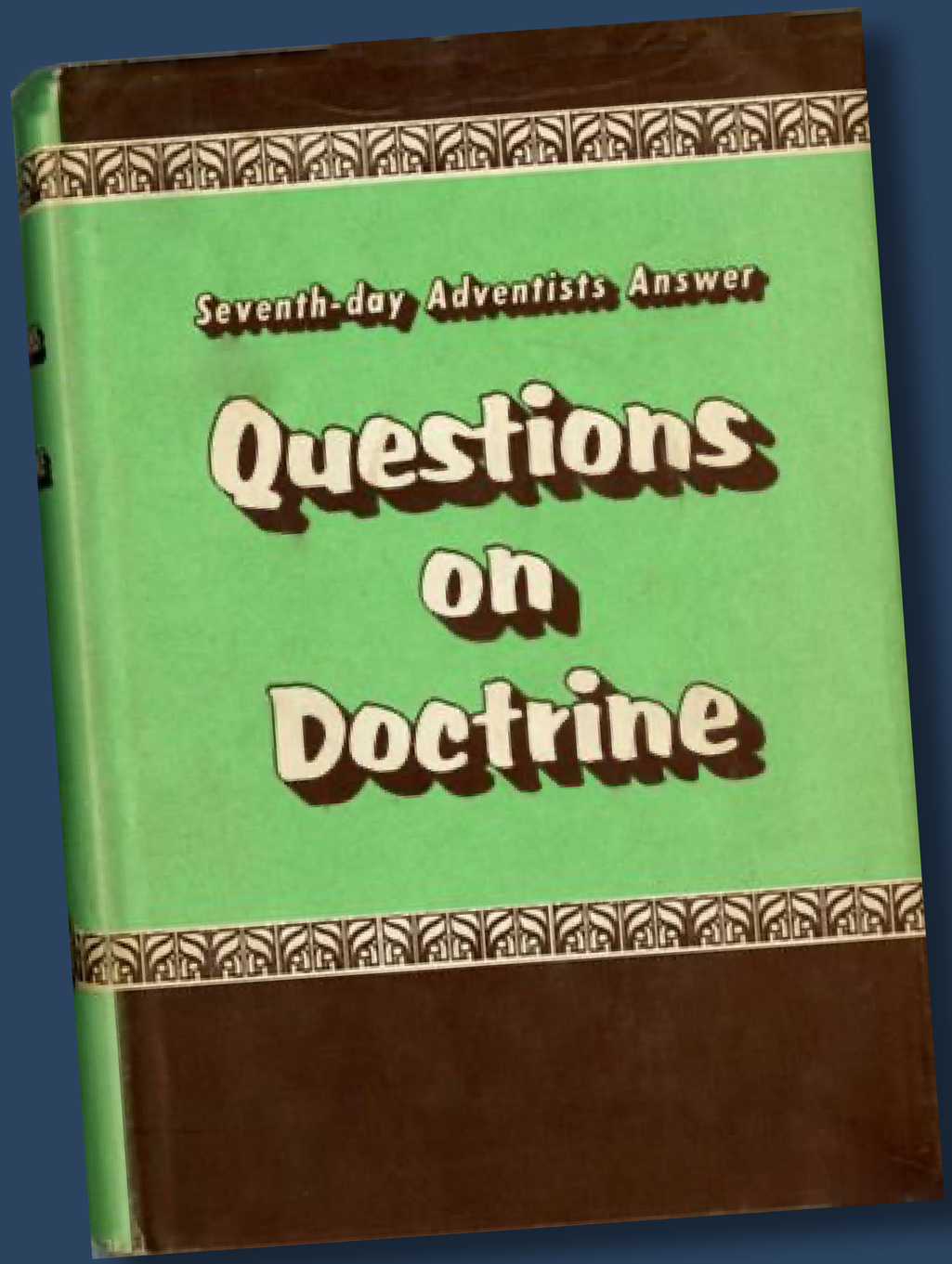
A serpent—what a strange symbol for Christ! This is the symbol for Satan

Jesus Our Substitute

BY NORMAN GULLEY



. . . all, without exception, are originally depraved. .... Guilt is from nature .... , even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's, but for their own defect. ... We are all sinners by nature. (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, chapter 2, part 2, sections 6-10; part 3, section 27)


Seventh-day Adventists Answer
Questions on Doctrine

1 John 3:4 (KJV) — 4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Romans 7:7 (KJV) — 7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

1 John 5:17 (KJV) — 17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Psalm 119:172 (KJV) — 172 My tongue shall speak of thy word:
for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law.” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 492)

The only definition we find in the Bible for sin is that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 320)

Matthew 5:21–22 (KJV) — 21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Mark 7:21–23 (KJV) — 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,
22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

John 3:3 (KJV) — 3 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.

Talk of Christ, and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off. It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree. The leaves will reappear. The ax must be laid at the root of the tree, and then the leaves will fall off, never to return. (*Evangelism*, p. 272)

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (KJV) — 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

1 Corinthians 9:27 (KJV) — 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331.1)

Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331.2)

The gospel of Christ is the law exemplified in character.

(*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 108.2)

Ezekiel 18:2–4 (KJV) — 2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? 3 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 18:20 (KJV) — 20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306.3).

James 4:17 (KJV) — 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Psalm 119:172 (KJV) — 172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Righteousness is right doing.

(*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.2)

The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. (*Christ's Object Lessons,* p. 97.3)

In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. And yet He knew no sin. He was the Lamb "without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

(*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 256.1)

We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ. (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 256.2)

The Saviour is wounded afresh and put to open shame when His people pay no heed to His word. He came to this world and lived a sinless life, that in His power His people might also live lives of sinlessness. He desires them by practicing the principles of truth to show to the world that God's grace has power to sanctify the heart. (*The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1902, par. 8)

Everyone who by faith obeys God’s commandments, will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression. (*Maranatha*, p. 224.5, 1902)

Romans 12:2 (KJV) — 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1 John 1:7–9 (KJV) — 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The End