Two Natures of Jesus

A REFRESHING LOOK AT THE NATURE OF CHRIST

By Norman Bradley

During the years following 1888, there were several teachings that became a sensitive issue with the leaders and E.J. Waggoner and A.T. Jones. One of the strongest of these was the "human nature of Christ". Considering the teaching of Arianism, "only one God" was the accepted doctrine by some of the church leaders, it is easy to see why there was conflict.

Waggoner's articles seems to show his belief in the fallen nature of Christ at his birth. I do not agree with this, neither do I believe in the pre-fall teaching. This study will give my conclusions of this subject. You may be pleasantly surprised at these findings. Instead of the usual antagonism, this will bring both sides together with a peaceful conclusion.

The subject of the Nature of Christ has been exceedingly controversial. In the descriptive writings of E.G. White she *appears* to present both a pre-fall *and* a post fall nature - that is where much of the conflict has been for Seventh-day Adventists. Which one is correct? Are we looking at those insights properly? Are we asking the wrong questions? If you ask the wrong questions about Jesus' nature, you will certainly get wrong answers. Why are there so many different opinions coming fom the same information? It is obvious - the wrong questions are being raised.

Let's begin with this text: Hebrews 10:5- "A body hast thou prepared for me." If we ask the right questions about this verse we will come up with helpful answers that will bring both sides of the argument together.

1. Why did there have to be a special body prepared for Him?
2. What kind of a body was required?
3. What did He need to accomplish with that special body?
4. Was it necessary to be just like mine?
5. How was that body different?
6. Were two natures blended in that one body?
7. Could two natures have different expressions within the life of Jesus?

Typically, Christians query: "Was He just like me or was He like Adam before the fall? If He was not just like me, what chance do I have? If He was born with a pre-fall nature, then He had an advantage over me." Thoughts like those are really <u>selfish in nature</u>. They are restrictive and fail to see Christ's mission in the light of redemption and the universal Great Controversy theme.

If you say, "He was not tempted just like me," you are correct. His temptations were on a much higher scale than ours-therefore, we cannot compare them to ours. Can you turn stones into bread? Christ could have by usingHis divine power. He was hungry so why didn't He do it? That would have broken a covenant that He

had made with the Father before creation. *He would not use divine power to benefit self.*

"He endured the test,greater than we shall ever be called to endure."[1] His temptations were at a divine level, but He had to meet them in His human nature. We cannot be tempted on that level. All of our temptations can be categorized basically under His three great wilderness temptations, but at a vastly lower level. Christ had to face temptation with reliance on His *Father's power, not His own.*

POSITIONAL THOUGHTS

Nature of the First Adam - Pre-fall

There was something much bigger in scope going on than simply man's salvation at the first Advent. Behind the scenes charges had been made against the Father in heaven by Lucifer challenging His Character and Law. "Working with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealing his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God, he endeavored to excite dissatisfaction concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that they imposed an *unnecessary restraint*. Since their natures were holy, he urged that the angels should obey the dictates of their *own will*. He sought to create sympathy for himself by representing that God had dealt unjustly with him in bestowing supreme honor upon Christ."[2]
These issues needed to be proven false so the whole universe could see the truth.

After creation and the fall of Adam, there was another charge made by Satan that man, as he was created, could not keep the Divine Law. Thus, "Christ came to the earth, taking humanity and standing as man's representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that man, *as God created him*, connected with the Father and the Son, could obey every divine requirement."[3] This meant there had to be another Adam, who would not be tricked by the Devil, in order to do away with that charge. To some it may have seemed hardly a fair trial with the first Adam with its deceptive nature. Yet, the second Adam came with 4,000 years of degeneration with a much greater chance for failure. Jesus came exhibiting divine *restraint.* He would only rely on the Father's divine power and would submit only and fully to His will.

His prepared *body* came with the degeneration of His day, but not with the fallen carnal nature with a propensity to sin. He was aware of the deceitfulness of the devil and must not be deceived into failure. He needed a *pre-fall nature* to accomplish this. "Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God, he began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam's failure."[4] "Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him, he was in the image of God."[5] Jesus lived in this condition for the first 30 year, giving a living demonstration that "man as he was created could keep the Divine Law."[6]
The first Adam could have done this, and would have if he had put God first in his thinking as Christ did.[7]

Today, if we stay moment by moment surrendered to Him, we too can perfect a character just like Christ did through His power.

As soon as we realized our need, the gift of Christ's perfect character is presented for the demands of the Law as our justification. At that moment in time, we are among the rescued, like the thief on the cross.

Since we don't die at that point, we continue to discover our weakness for sin is still strong. That nature and propensity condemns us to death again and again. What do I do now *already* being a sinner? The devil knows what you helplessly ask and makes another charge against God's justice regarding you, *a sinful person*. "Will God banish me and my angels from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord, in justice. Thy throne will not stand in righteousness and judgment. Justice demands that sentence be pronounced against them."[8] It is as if he was saying to God, "If you take this sinner into heaven, then I'm coming back in right behind him."

Nature of Man - Post-fall

Enter the second Adam, again to the rescue of mankind. By taking the fallen nature of man upon Himself and living victoriously for the last three and one-half years of His life on this planet, Christ demonstrated that fallen mankind can live without sinning. "From the desert (baptism) to Calvary (cross), the storm of Satan's wrath beat upon Him, but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of His Father, and press on in the bloodstained path. All the efforts of Satan to oppress and overcome Him only brought out in a purer light His spotless character."[9] Being buffeted with everything the Devil could put upon Him, yet holding even more firmly to the Father's hand He prevailed. This perfect character in man's *fallen nature* is our second gift that opens the door to the Eternal Life even though we are still sinners. "**He took upon His *sinless nature*, our *sinful nature***, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted."[10]

All we have to do is accept this gift by faith with a heart full of love for His unspeakable gift. This is a substitution work that we cannot do. This amazing plan was conceived in the omniscient mind of God; even beyond the brilliant mind of him who was created perfect but rebelled. The devil cannot accept this gift because his evil mind cannot produce the Love response needed to accept it. Therefore he has excluded himself from ever entering heaven again. This was a sacrificial plan that he was not capable of understanding. What an amazing plan!

Don't forget the cross and the second death! Man was doomed to die regardless of the perfect character Christ developed in our fallen nature. Sin had to collect its wages, the second death, total separation from the Father's life support system. Christ the second Adam was willing to go the full measure to rescue us, first in the Gethsemane experience where He was prepared for the cross and then the tomb. This is where we see the greatest calculated risk that ever was taken, even far greater than the risk of creating beings with the power of choice. Here is where He risked everything to save us. He bore the sin *and* guilt of the world.

The Divine Nature

What about the divine Christ, the Son of God and Father? He had a full one hundred percent Divine nature as well as one hundred percent human nature. "Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No, the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person - the man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible. Christ, the sinless One, will save every son and daughter of Adam who accepts the salvation proffered them, consenting to become the children of God. The Saviour has purchased the fallen race with His own blood.[11] These two natures were mysteriously blended together and could not be separated - as I am both English and Irish. If I cut my finger, I cannot let out just my English blood so I could then say, "I'm one hundred percent Irish." No offence

to the English. The mixture is inseparable. So it was with the Divine-human Christ.

"Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank se bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God."[12]

This enlarges the picture of the redemptive plan into enormous proportions. Divinity could not die! What would happen to His Divine nature if the human Christ should fail to endure the cross? The tomb (eternal) would be His lot, totally separated from His Father forever. Would He be forever locked in a dark tomb never to see His Father again? That caused the human Christ to sweat blood. "The awful moment had come - that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."[13]

Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life."[14] What an enormous price was paid for fallen mankind. What an enormous risk was taken. Can you comprehend it? Thank God we will never fully know what the consequences would have been if He had failed.

Confirmatory Thoughts

So far I have offered limited proof for all this reasoning of Christ living thirty years in the pre-fallen nature and the last three and one-half years in the post-fallen nature. I had struggled with this subject for 30 years. Here is the beginning of my understanding of what heretofore seemed as apparent contradictions in the Spirit of Prophecy. Here is the evidence that brought me to these conclusions. I very carefully read five chapters of the Desire of Ages, "Days of Conflict, The Baptism, The Temptation, Gethsemane, and Calvary." As I read each chapter I listed every key thought, I compared His life with my life. They were not the same. Here is a list of differences I found:

Days of Conflict

He was born that Holy thing. Luke 1:35

I must be about my Father's business.

Rabbis were astonished at His questions and answers.

He asked for their authority in Holy Writ.

He acted for Himself in forming character.

Even respect for His parents could not turn Him from God's word.

His life was a bitter one.

He learned silence and patient endurance.

He distinguished between false and true.

His strict obedience to the Law was condemned as stubbornness.

His education was of a higher type.

He had access to the "Tree of Life."

He possessed tact that His brothers did not have.

They charged Him, threatened Him and tried to intimidate Him, but He passed on.

Great contradictions were presented to Him.

He was the Divine Son yet a helpless child.

He was not like His brothers: their standards were different.

They had not His power in their lives.

He hated sin- it caused Him pain. His life condemned evil.

He did not commit one wrong act.

He did not join in the frolics of the youth.

He did not fail nor become discouraged.

He did not retaliate

His course of action was a mystery to His parents - they urged Him to conform to the Rabbis.

His was a Divine character.

As I looked at all these comments I asked, "Was I like that?" Was He just like me? Something was vastly different. I had a somewhat normal childhood, brothers, sisters, Christian parents but I did not grow up like Him. Our natures were very different. His was sinless, mine was not.

Baptism

On pages 111&112 in the book, *Desire of Ages*, some of the most revealing things were recorded for us:

A new and important ***era*** was opening up before Him.

He was standing on a wider stage.

Entering the conflict of His life (This was a definite change in His life).

His coming was like the **unsheathing of a sword**. (More on this comment later)

He was now looked upon as an enemy and a destroyer to His people.

He would be condemned as a law breaker.

He must bear the burden of guilt, feel the shame, dwell with strife.

Truth must abide with falsehood; purity with vileness.

It was torture to His Spirit.

The sins of the world were ***laid*** *upon Christ.*

He suffered the humiliation of ***taking*** our ***fallen nature upon Himself.***

He was pleading for His Father's approval.

What is going on here? He has not had to plead like this before. His relationship to sin, error and guilt was changing. This reveals He is now taking our fallen nature upon Himself at this point in time. How could He take it if He already had it from birth as some believe. "He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted."[15] All this clearly says the sins of the world were **laid upon** Him at His baptism at 30 years of age.

The Sanctuary Explains

When all else fails, go the the Sanctuary to confirm redemptive truth. Let us follow the path of sin as the sinner carries his lamb to the altar. When did the lamb become his substitute? Was it while it was

growing up in the field, when the sinner carried it to the altar, when he placed it before the altar, or was it when he placed his hands on its head and confessed his sins into it's blood? When he places the lamb at the altar of burnt offerings and confesses his sins into the blood of this innocent substitute then the lamb has the burden of guilt placed on him. Not before this! Now the innoceent lamb becomes the sinner's substitute. Before its death, the burden is laid on it's head. "The *next day* [after His baptism] John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29 He was not referred to as the Lamb of God before His baptism.

We have a match! The baptism, the taking of the fallen nature, carried with it the guilt and burden of the sins of the world, being placed upon Him. This certainly was a newer and wider stage. The battle intensifies from now on with a separation beginning between Him and His Father because He was now counted with the sinners as one with them. It was like the **unsheathing of a sword.** What does that mean? "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man [that is] my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Zech.13:7 This sword was unsheathed at His baptism when He took our fallen nature upon Himself. He then became our substitute. We will discuss this more shortly.

Gethsemane

At His baptism He was standing in a new and important era, on ***a wider stage***.

The setting is now changed again. We find Jesus once again standing ***in a different attitude***.[16]

He is approaching the consummation of His work.

The real separation starts, agony and suffering begin.

He is enduring the wrath of God! Their unity is breaking up.

Battling the powers of darkness in human nature. (Yes, in fallen human nature.)

His soul is pierced; the conflict is terrible.

The sins weigh heavily upon Him. It was a superhuman agony- it was an awful moment.

The destiny of the world, the fate of humanity was hanging in the balance.

He was tempted to let humanity go.

Sorrow was beyond comprehension.

He was drinking the cup of fire baptism (the second death-baptism of blood)

Fainting, staggering, His visage marred, sweat blood.

Great darkness was upon Him.

He trod the winepress alone.

The separation gets greater.

The mysterious cup trembled.

A mighty angel is sent from heaven.

He gains the victory. ***The sword of separation has been flashing!***

This struggle prepared Him for Calvary

Calvary

He was made a curse for us.

Going toward the crucifixion the cross was prepared.

He was bruised and bleeding.

The cross was too heavy.

Twice scourged.

Human nature could bear no more.

Weak, staggering, taunted, reviled.

The hatred of the crowd.

His humiliation.

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Matt.26:31 (***The sword again***) "Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts."Zech.13:7 17

Spikes were driven into His flesh.

Death dew on His face.

He prayed for them.

The cross was thrust into the ground with violence - most intense agony.

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look [and] stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Ps.22:16-18.

"Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in My thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Ps.69:20-21.

No comforters.

Satan and his angels in human form are there.

Enemies vented rage upon Him, saying "Come down if you can." He would not.

He was numbered with the transgressors.

The Lord of Glory was dying.

The wrath of God against sin was filling His soul with consternation.

The withdrawal of the Divine countenance ***pierced His heart!*** ***(The sword has struck!)***

Sorrow that we can never understand.

Mental suffering so great - physical suffering hardly felt.

Fierce temptations wrung His heart. (This is like the moment that caused Him to sweat blood in Gethsemane).

He could not see beyond the portals of the tomb.

He feared eternal separation from the Father!

Amid the dark cloud He drained the cup. (for you and me).

The cup was so bitter it broke His heart!

Lightning was hurled at Him.

Vengeance of heaven was upon Him; God has forsaken Him!

Unutterable anguish fills His soul.

There is an earthquake and confusion.

The curtain is rent; the lamb escapes.

IT IS FINISHED!! He has offered Himself as a perfect offering.

CHRIST IS THE VICTOR! HE WILL TAKE OVER THE PRIESTHOOD.

"From the desert to Calvary, the storm of Satan's wrath beat upon Him, but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of His Father, and press on in the blood stained path. All he efforts of Satan to oppress and overcome Him only brought out in a purer light His spotless character."[18] This says from His baptism to the cross there was special warfare going on because He was gaining the victory of perfecting a perfect character in our fallen nature.

I could give you the page and paragraph of each partial quotation thought, but that would deny you a very special blessing. Read these chapters as I did, one verse at a time. Look for the little details that unfold the story of **His two natures at different stages of His life**. Both are very needful and full of meaning for you and me. When we see this larger picture we can harmonize all these apparent contradictory issues about being born sinless and others that say he had our fallen nature. **They are both correct.** When we put them in their proper time slot the mystery is solved.

We will never solve the complete mystery of the incarnation.

For thirty years I struggled with this controversy, first on one side and then the other, trying to make the pieces fit together. I've read books and articles and listened to endless tapes on both sides. That is what drove me to my knees, calling for help from the Holy Spirit. When I saw this larger picture I was so filled with gratitude that I wanted to do more than just take off my shoes. I wanted to take my sinful cloak off and thank Him forever for doing this for me. I could not ask for a more satisfactory answer to my pleading prayer to understand this divisive subject. "The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; he gave proof of his humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground'. We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth."[19]

May you also have this blessed experience when you search these chapters on your knees is my prayer for each of you. Do not take my word for all of this. You can use this blessing as much as I did . So take the time and study it prayerfully. May you be blessed as I was. Then you can tell someone else carefully and prayerfully.

References

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2 The Great controversy, p.495.2

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4 Youth Instructor, June 2, 1898 par.1

5 Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol.5 p.1128.4

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7 Steps to Christ, p.64

8 Testimonies, vol.5, p.474.1

9 Desire of Ages, p.759.4

10 Medical Ministry, p.181.3

11 Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5 p. 1113.2

12 Desire of Ages, p.753.2

13 Desire of Ages, p.690.2

14 Desire of Ages, p. 690.3

15 Medical Ministry, p.181.3

16 Desire of Ages, p. 686.3

17 Desire of Ages, p. 686.4

18 Desire of Ages, p.759.4

19 Youth Instructor, Oct. 13, 1898 par 6

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