

## Theology of Questions on Doctrine: Issues Surrounding the Nature of Christ and the Atonement

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This chapter assumes that the basic background and history of QOD would have been elaborated in earlier pages of this document, and so no formal attention is given to those aspects of the book, except as they become necessary for the development of the present theme.

Adventists are no strangers to opposition and ridicule--these having been part and parcel of the church's experience from the beginning. Sooner or later, however, every organization grows tired of needless misunderstanding, and seizes any opportunity to provide a correct image of itself.

For the Adventist Church, such an opportunity came through a series of conversations with certain Evangelicals in the mid 1950s.<sup>1</sup> It would be easy to fault the church at the time for what may seem (from our distance) an over-eagerness to prove to these representatives (who do they think they are?) that we are authentic Christians. But since polemicist Walter Martin<sup>2</sup> (with partial and prejudiced information) was prepared to write about us anyway, prudence suggested that the church do what it could to represent itself in as correct a manner as possible.

I have divided this summary into four parts: 1) QOD's position on the nature of Christ; 2) its position on the atonement; 3) the resulting reaction and controversy; and 4) an assessment and critique.

### **QOD on the Nature of Christ**

QOD takes the position that while Jesus "ever remained the blameless Son of God," His humanity was "real and genuine." "He hungered and thirsted and was weary. He needed food and rest and was refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man, craving human sympathy and needing divine assistance" (QOD 52).

Then follow all the usual descriptives: He was tempted; was touched with the feelings of our infirmities; experienced "the various stages of growth, like any other member of the race; was obedient to His parents; was subject to common human emotions (sorrow, pain); and as a homeless wanderer, had no place to lay His head. (QOD 52).

All the while, however, Christ retained His deity. And though coming in the "likeness" of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), He, as the second Adam, did not possess a single taint of our sinful propensities and passions (QOD 52). Yes, there was "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6); yes, He bore our iniquities (Isa. 53:11); and yes, God "made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). (QOD 56). But, says the book, "whatever ... [that last statement] means, it certainly does *not* mean that our Immaculate Lord *became a sinner.*" (QOD 56).

It's at this point, in its effort (as it were) to shield Jesus, that QOD steps on precarious ground—a peril facing anyone, regardless of their particular view, who ventures unto this terrain. Commenting on an Ellen G. White statement (cited on page 59) that Jesus “identified Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our failings,” QOD doubles back to Isaiah’s statement that Jesus “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows (Isa 53:4, KJV) (or in Matthew’s rendering: “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses).

“He did *bear* all this,” QOD admits, and then goes on to put the following question: “Could it not be that He bore this vicariously... , just as He bore the sins of the whole world?” (QOD 59). “These weaknesses, frailties, infirmities, failings,” it says, “are things which we, with our sinful, fallen natures, have to bear. To us they are natural, inherent, but when He bore them, He took them not as something innately His, but He bore them as our substitute. He bore them in His perfect, sinless nature” (QOD 59). “It could hardly be construed” from these scriptures, says QOD, “that Jesus was diseased or that He experienced the frailties to which our fallen human nature is heir” (QOD 59).

But in what sense can it be said that Jesus bore our weaknesses, frailties, and sicknesses “vicariously”? How does Jesus experience the frailty of hunger vicariously? Is that to say that His hunger pangs were unreal? Did he not actually experience pain? And fatigue? Was His feeling of sorrow not genuine?

We see where QOD is heading with this when we understand that it all is a build-up to protecting the integrity of Christ’s moral and spiritual nature. “Christ bore all this vicariously,” QOD maintains, “just as vicariously He bore the iniquities of us all” (QOD 59, 60). And having laid that foundation, it now feels ready to entertain a certain group of statements from Ellen G. White it probably saw as somewhat touchy--statements like the following (which it lists in summary form at the top of page 60):

“We read that Jesus took ‘our nature’ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25); He ‘took upon Himself human nature’ (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128); ...He took ‘our fallen nature’ (*Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office*, p. 13, May 26, 1896); He took ‘man’s nature in its fallen condition’ (*Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898).”

QOD’s approach to such statements was to assert that “whatever Jesus took was not His *intrinsically* or *innately*. His taking the burden of our inherited weakness and failings, even after four thousand years of accumulated infirmities and degeneracy,<sup>3</sup> did not in the slightest degree taint His human nature” (QOD 61; italics supplied).

QOD seems nervous where Ellen G. White isn’t. “Christ did not make believe take human nature,” she says (in a statement cited in QOD 653), “He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature.”<sup>4</sup> She seems to feel no need to indulge in theological gymnastics (with terms like “vicarious” or “innate”), but instead offers clear affirmations, followed by equally clear-cut caveats--and those who accept the affirmations should be equally willing also to allow the caveats.

Her statements, as cited on pages 60 and 61, are (in part), as follows: “He took ‘the nature but not the sinfulness of man.’—*Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901. He took ‘man’s nature in its

fallen condition,’ but ‘...did not in the least participate in its sin.’—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131. ‘He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions.’—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 202. In ‘identifying Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our feelings, ...He was a mighty petitioner, *not possessing the passions of our human, fallen nature.*’—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 508, 509. (Italics supplied). ‘We should have no misgivings in regard to *the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ.*’—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131. (Italics supplied.) The Son of God ‘became like one of us, *except in sin.*’—*The Youth’s Instructor*, Oct. 20, 1886. (Italics supplied.)”

The difficulty and delicateness of the subject should steer us away from passing harsh judgments on those with variant views. But QOD’s “vicarious” approach to the issue (to put it that way) is as confusing as it is unwarranted. Just one thing Ellen G. White wanted to make clear—and one thing only. We see it in that last statement above, quoted from the *Youth’s Instructor*. She said: Jesus “became like one of us, *except in sin.*” In that single remark, this uneducated lady cuts to the chase and confounds much of our heated debates, falling squarely in sync with the best theology in Christendom. The sentiments are right out of the Creed of Chalcedon (so to speak), penned more than 1400 years earlier, where (speaking of Jesus) it says: “...in all things like unto us, sin only excepted.”<sup>5</sup> And it leaves us free to say that Jesus took, *actually took*, our infirmities, our weaknesses, our nature—not vicariously, but in actuality. And we can say all this without equivocation, so long as we understand, with not a single iota of compromise, that *nothing He took amounted to sin—either experientially or inherently.*

It may come as a surprise to many Adventists who’ve been following discussions on the nature of Christ within the church to discover that words like “pre-lapsarian” and “post-lapsarian” are not common terms in Christian theology. One finds expressions like “sub-lapsarian” and “supra-lapsarian” used in connection with predestination in Calvinistic theology. And there is, of course, the concept of the “lapsed”—a term describing Christians who fell away (lapsed) during times of persecution in the early centuries. But the expressions “pre-lapsarian” and “post-lapsarian” seem to have found their widest use among Adventists, perhaps a legacy from the Christian Connection roots of some of our early pioneers.

In regard to the incarnation, pre-lapsarians believe that Christ took the nature of Adam *before* he fell (in other words, before he lapsed). Post-lapsarians believe just the opposite—that Jesus took the nature of humans after the fall. On which side did QOD come down?

One way to approach the question is to observe which statements of Ellen G White it selected for display. On the one hand, one finds a group of EGW assertions that, on their face, seem to have a pre-lapsarian leaning. Notice, for example, the following (in each case, the emphasis is supplied):

- 1) “*No one, looking upon the childlike countenance, shining with animation, could say that Christ was just like other children.* He was God in human flesh.”<sup>6</sup> (QOD 649).
- 2) “[Christ] vanquished Satan *in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory.* (Incidentally, what appears as a pre-lapsarian statement here loses force as soon as the following

sentence is added: “The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human [not specifically in Adam’s] nature.”<sup>7</sup> (QOD 651)

3) “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 ... could obey every divine requirement.*”<sup>8</sup> (QOD 650)

4) “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.”<sup>9</sup> (QOD 650)

But then, there are other statements that would put her clearly on the post-lapsarian side:

1) “But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body... It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in *physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.*”<sup>10</sup> (QOD 652).

2) Christ “took human nature, and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race.”<sup>11</sup> (QOD 656).

3) “It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. *But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity.*”<sup>12</sup> (QOD 656, italics supplied).

In all fairness, then--on the basis of the EGW statements QOD selected for display, we may conclude that the book managed to stay clear of adopting one side or the other in the pre-lapsarian-post-lapsarian debate. This is an important point to note, in view of the heatedness of the decades-old controversy over this issue.

### **QOD on the Atonement**

The atonement is a broad subject. Rivers of ink have been employed over the centuries in attempts adequately to describe God’s saving work in Jesus. This treatment stays clear of the bulk of all this, restricting itself to aspects of the doctrine specifically elaborated in QOD, particularly those elements that have given rise to controversy within the Adventist Church.<sup>13</sup>

A major issue for the Evangelicals in conversation with Adventists was *whether our emphasis on a heavenly sanctuary ministry meant that Adventists advocated an incomplete atonement at the cross.*

QOD commences with the use of the terms for “atonement” in the Bible—*katallage* in the New Testament; *kaphar* in the Old. Given the wide variation of views on the subject within Christianity, it argues, it’s always important to ascertaining “what aspect of the atonement is

under consideration” in order to arrive at correct conclusions (see QOD 342). “In theological circles,” it says, “the term...has assumed a technical meaning and is generally used to describe the redeeming effect to Christ’s incarnation, sufferings, and death” (342).

On the basis of this definition, many Christians hold the position that “a completed atonement was made on the cross,” meaning that “on Calvary, the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice...was offered for our salvation” (QOD 342). Far from taking exception to this view, QOD asserts that “with this concept all true Christians readily and heartily agree” (QOD 342). Thus QOD speaks of a “fully completed atoning sacrifice made by Christ on Calvary” (QOD 352) and argues (on the basis of 1 John 2:2) that “the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ ... was *offered and completed* on the cross...” (QOD 350).

But while “fully agree[ing] with those who stress a completed atonement on the cross in the sense of an all-sufficient, once-for-all atonement sacrifice for sin” (QOD 342), QOD would broaden the definition of the concept to include what transpires post-cross in the context of Christ’s continuing priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, harking back to the Old Testament sacrificial system. Just as “it took four gospel writers to portray the life of Christ on earth, so in the Old Testament it took various sacrifices, or phases of the sacrificial work, to represent the all-inclusive work of Jesus as the great antitypical sacrifice for the redemption of a lost race” (QOD 357).

Emphasizing that Adventists believe both in a completed atonement on the cross and a continuing atonement in the heavenly sanctuary, QOD presents the atonement as an act that is past (the cross), a transaction that is present (Christ’s heavenly ministry), and a reality that is yet future (the restoration of all things in Christ). (See the QOD chapter beginning on 349). “The mighty sweep of the atonement, in its provisions and its efficacy,” the book says, “is ...vastly more comprehensive than many have thought” (QOD 351). “The atonement ...involves not only the transcendent act of the cross, but also the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice which are continually being applied to needy man. And this will continue on to the close of human probation” (QOD 352).

Accordingly, Christ’s continuing priestly ministry is of utmost importance for us on the experiential level. “We should remember,” says QOD, “that men are not automatically, involuntarily, impersonally, or universally saved en masse..., [but] “must individually accept of grace....” So “while Christ died *provisionally and potentially* for all men, and nothing more can be added, yet His death is *actually and ultimately efficacious* for those *only* who individually accept and avail themselves of its benefits” (QOD 351).

Emphasis on “this wider concept” of the atonement, says the book, “in no way detracts from the full efficacy of the death of the Son of God, once for all for the sins of men. [And] it is unfortunate that a lack of definition of terms so often leads to misunderstanding on the greatest theme of the Christian message” (QOD 348)

## **Reaction and Controversy**

Every cause needs a champion. And it's probably correct to say that absent the agitation by M. L. Andreasen, *Questions on Doctrine*, for all the effort put into it, would have created hardly a stir in the Adventist Church. After all, upwards of 97% of the book (to use a purely arbitrary figure) constitutes basic Adventist teaching, with wide acceptance within the church. It was the vociferous objections by M. L. Andreasen on the disputed 3% that quickly eliminated the book's yawn factor, catapulting it to icon status, with ardent supporters on the one hand and determined opponents on the other.

Accordingly, I will focus here on Andreasen as the symbol of opposition to the document among Adventists, an opposition that continues to this day through his modern followers and sympathizers.

Adventist evangelist Albion Fox Ballenger got into trouble with church leaders for, among other things, his attempt to make the sanctuary and other distinctly Adventist doctrines more evangelically friendly, more "gospel oriented." For his troubles, the well-meaning preacher was summoned before a special committee appointed to look into his theology. His trial was conducted in connection with a General Conference session in 1905, the first in Washington, D.C. Andreasen, only a young minister at the time, was not part of the trial committee, of course. But (by his own account) he was able to eavesdrop on the pre-dawn proceedings, undetected, by standing on the shoulder of another young minister outside an open upper window in the trial room.<sup>14</sup>

I point out in my doctoral dissertation that it is ironic that Andreasen, who traced his life-long interest in the sanctuary/atonement doctrine to that trial event, would himself come into conflict with church leaders 50 years later over some of the very issues for which Ballenger was tried--this time with the church championing key elements of Ballenger's 1905 position, namely, the attempt to express Adventist doctrine in more evangelically friendly terms; and the belief in a completed atonement at the cross.<sup>15</sup>

The reasons for Andreasen's intense polemics against Adventist church leaders over the publication of QOD are complex.<sup>16</sup> But we get at the heart of the issue only when we understand that to his mind, fundamental, non-negotiable Adventist doctrinal positions had come under threat in these conversations.<sup>17</sup>

The areas in QOD he found most reprehensible centered around *the nature of Christ and the atonement*, two issues that, for him, lay at the very foundation of Adventist faith and identity. Not coincidentally, these two areas also happened to be closely related to a key theological concern Andreasen had nurtured all his life--namely, *the cosmic vindication of God through the absolute perfection of an eschatological Remnant, a condition upon which the coming of Jesus depends*.<sup>18</sup> For Andreasen, the cleansing of the sanctuary involves the purification of that final Remnant, and their achievement of sinless perfection would spell the experiential culmination of the atonement.

It's against this background that we can appreciate the strength of his reaction to any notion of a completed (let alone "final"<sup>19</sup>) atonement at the cross. For him, the rapprochement with the Evangelicals constituted "a sinister attempt on the part of highly placed Adventist officials to compromise...the very essence of Adventism, the atonement."<sup>20</sup>

Andreasen divided the atonement into three parts, of which only the *second* involved Jesus' suffering and death. In the *first* part (comprising His earthly life and ministry), Christ demonstrated that sin could be completely resisted and overcome; that complete victory is possible.<sup>21</sup>

The *third* phase of the atonement, occurring in the heavenly sanctuary, involves the purification and cleansing of the Remnant, Christ demonstrating in their lives that His victory over sin *was not unique*, but is repeatable by them.<sup>22</sup>

The rationale for Andreasen's contention that Jesus' victory is repeatable by the final generation had everything to do with his perception of the kind of humanity Jesus took. We see this in his comment on Hebrews 10:19, 20, in which he maintained that Christ's body needed to be "cleansed and purified from every defilement" before He could pass "through the curtain" into the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>23</sup> And just as Jesus needed to be purified and cleansed, just so His followers, having the same body, need to undergo a similar purification and cleansing. (The problems with this view are enormous if we are to understand Jesus' whole mental apparatus as an essential part of His body.)

Against that background, Andreasen considered key QOD statements on the nature of Christ to be utterly reckless and irresponsible. As regards the nature of Christ during the incarnation, for example, Donald G. Barnhouse, a participant in the Adventist-Evangelical conversations, "reported that Adventist leaders had affirmed that it was 'sinless, holy and perfect,' and that any other position was 'completely repugnant' to them."<sup>24</sup>

Andreasen was deeply offended. As he understood it, "Christ in His incarnation took upon Himself sinful human nature. He was not, as [QOD had]... affirmed, 'exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam'"<sup>25</sup> "For him, no 'heresy' could be 'more harmful' than that which asserted that 'God extended special favors and exemptions to Christ.'"<sup>26</sup> In effect, such a theory placed an indictment on God 'as the author of a scheme to deceive both men and Satan.'<sup>27</sup>

"If the notion that Christ was 'exempt' from 'inherited passions and pollutions' destroyed the *first* phase of the atonement, the idea that the atonement at the cross was 'final' [or even "complete"] destroyed the *third* phase..., that transpiring in the most holy place."<sup>28</sup> For as Andreasen saw it, that last phase of the atonement, a "distinctively Adventist" teaching, is critical, and cannot be jettisoned from Adventist theology without severe damage. For it's during this phase that Christ would fulfill His promise to make us overcomers.<sup>29</sup> The work of atonement cannot be finished without that final demonstration of perfection in the 144,000, "the crown and pride of the finished mediatorial work of Christ."<sup>30</sup>

Andreasen was shocked to see "the church of the living God," commissioned to carry the gospel to the final generation, begging for entrance into the evangelical fold. "This is more than apostasy," he said, it is "giving up Adventism," the "rape of a whole people: a treasonous denial of "God's leading in the past."<sup>31</sup> It is "the omega apostasy" (sic), he said.<sup>32</sup> "A confrontation quickly developed between him and high-ranking Adventist leaders, particularly the then president of the General Conference, Reuben R. Figuhr; and a series of strongly worded letters were exchanged" between them.<sup>33</sup>

“As the conflict grew, Andreasen came to see himself as the target of suppression on the part of the church’s top leadership” His credentials were suspended for what the GC committee called “grave and false charges against the general leadership” of the church, and for Andreasen’s refusal to respond to the appeals of church leaders. As might be expected, Andreasen reacted sharply to the GC action, “declaring it ‘illegal’ and ‘void,’” and called for the “impeachment” of the General Conference president.<sup>34</sup>

Andreasen felt utterly convicted on this point. In his view, no one can believe in a final atonement at the cross and remain an Adventist, for a final atonement at the cross automatically annuls the heavenly sanctuary atonement commencing in 1844. Said Andreasen: “Our message stands or falls with the question of the atonement.”<sup>35</sup> In the same article he charged top Adventist leaders with “base apostasy” (sic), and called upon them to either “repent or resign.”

### Assessment and Critique

Perhaps it was inevitable that QOD and its participants, engaged in as wide-ranging a project as these conversations turned out to be, would at some point commit a blunder or two—unintentional or not. I note here three such instances.

*The first* had to do with the use of the expression “lunatic fringe” by the Adventist conferees to describe Adventists who held to a position on the nature of Christ different from theirs.<sup>36</sup> Such pejorative characterizations were exceedingly unproductive and led to much bad blood between them and their detractors.<sup>37</sup>

*Another faux pas* (as some would consider it) was the subhead chosen for a subsection of appendix B listing a group of Ellen G White’s statements on Christ’s humanity. “Took Sinless Human Nature,” it said ((p. 650).

Ironically, White herself never puts the three words (“sinless human nature”) together in any reference I could find. Indeed, among the citations collected under the heading in question is one statement in which she avers that Christ took “upon Himself man’s nature in its fallen condition” (QOD, 650). It would be rather difficult to make the case that taking “man’s nature in its fallen condition” is somehow equal to taking “sinless human nature.” (Incidentally—and this is also significant, neither did EGW ever use the expression “sinful human nature” to describe what Jesus assumed in the incarnation, even though Andreasen did not hesitate to brandish the expression in his conflict with the QOD conferees.<sup>38</sup>

### The Nature Jesus Took

The following statement (from QOD 383) gave Andreasen considerable grief. Speaking about Jesus, it says: “He could rightly be ‘chosen out of the people’ because He was ‘holy,



harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners' (Heb. 7:26). He came into humanity, not by natural generation, but by a miracle. His birth was supernatural; God was His Father. Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendents of Adam.... There was nothing in Him that responded to the evil one."

Andreasen was aghast! Christ was "not exempt from temptation," he argued. "A man may not *have* cancer, but does that mean that he is *immune* from it, exempt from it? Not at all. Next year he may be afflicted with it."<sup>39</sup> "There can be no heresy more harmful," he said.<sup>40</sup>

What I've noticed vis-à-vis White's nature-of-Christ statements, however, is precisely what gave Andreasen difficulty in respect to her atonement ones. "Apparent discrepancy" was the expression he used to characterize her atonement statements.<sup>41</sup> And we see a similar pattern in regard to her statements on Christ's nature. She could say on the one hand that "the divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life,"<sup>42</sup> and on the other that "the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us," "the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God."<sup>43</sup> Thus, she gives equal weight to both aspects.

Throughout her writings we see this balance. Some statements seem to give the impression that Christ is all like us; others emphasize the wide difference. Whereas QOD was at pains to affirm that Christ took our weaknesses and infirmities *vicariously*, she saw the situation otherwise. In one extraordinary statement, she mentions that Jesus "might have helped His human nature to withstand *the inroads of disease* by pouring from His divine nature vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. *But He humbled Himself to man's nature....* What humility was this!" (QOD 656).<sup>44</sup>

That statement seems to define, indirectly, much of what she meant when she speaks of Jesus taking on the weaknesses of human nature, and helps clarify her apparently pre-lapsarian comments. Here she indicates that Christ "might have," *but did not* help "His human nature to withstand the inroads of disease." He did not *pour* into his human nature "vitality and undecaying vigor" from his divine nature. This indicates that He was vulnerable to physical human weaknesses and disease. In another statement (cited in QOD 649), she indicates God's plan for human salvation "provided that Christ should know hunger, and poverty, and every phase of man's experience."<sup>45</sup>

As quoted in QOD 567, she makes it clear, however, that Christ "was born without a taint of sin...."<sup>46</sup> There'd be no point in making such a remark, except to distinguish His birth from that of all other humans since the fall. She makes that crystal clear when, after describing the "deep-rooted, deadly" "leprosy of sin" that has infected all of us, she says: "But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, *receives no pollution.*"<sup>47</sup>

No one, including those with the prophetic gift, speaks with the same tightness of language at all times and under all circumstances. So long as we perceive no misunderstanding of our words, we are content to carry on without taking any special precaution. But the moment someone expresses puzzlement about what they think they're hearing from us, we tighten our language to prevent any further misinterpretation.

That's undoubtedly what we see in her response to an Adventist Brother on one occasion—it's one of her most careful and definitive statements on the issue in question. Anchoring her remarks on Luke 1:31-35, among other scriptures, she wrote, as follows:

*“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. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.*

*“Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God.... [At this point she cites Luke 1:35: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”]*

*“These words do not refer to any human being, except to the Son of the infinite God. Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. ... The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.”<sup>48</sup>*

## **Handling the Atonement**

*The third of the three faux pas alluded to above came from L. E. Froom, one of QOD's authors. Writing in a church magazine, he let slip the word “final” in describing the atonement at the cross.<sup>49</sup> What Froom was trying to do, evidently, was to put to rest allegations that Adventists somehow regarded the transaction at the cross as insufficient. Thus he emphasized in the article that what happened there was “a single, transcendent act—once for all, all-sufficient, all-efficient, and never to be repeated.” It was in that sense that he conceived of it as “final.” But Andreasen found the apparent blunder too tempting to pass up, never mind that in the same article Froom was clear that the atonement could neither be “limited just to the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, nor to the ministry of Christ “in the sanctuary above....”<sup>50</sup>*

Adventists have the distinction of being the only Christian group to take seriously the anticipation of Christ's atoning sacrifice as depicted in the Old Testament sanctuary system. I find this both remarkable and puzzling, in view of the elaborate development of this concept of the atonement in the Book of Hebrews. In those instances where QOD seeks to bolster the Adventist position with citations from non-Adventist Christian theological sources, such support often comes across as tepid and ambiguous.<sup>51</sup>

Certain aspects of QOD's development of the subject of the atonement do seem a tad problematic. In one place, for instance--perhaps trying to prove too much, QOD launches into a discussion of the semantic range of "kaphar," a gratuitous exercise that led to what it saw as examples of *atonement without blood sacrifice*. Seizing upon such sentiments, its critics quickly accused it of advocating "bloodless atonement"--a controversy that led to the spilling of much needless ink and emotion.<sup>52</sup>

In a similar vein, QOD managed to come up with examples of atonement that leave one squirming. To use the vicious killing of Saul's descendents in reparation for Saul's earlier slaughter of the Gibeonites as a good example of atonement (see QOD 344, 345) is both puzzling and problematic. And to suggest that the violent action of Phinehas--however important in the history of Israel—is somehow illustrative of the work of Jesus (QOD 346) engenders unnecessary and uncomfortable questions. QOD might have done better to cite such examples (if it had to) as distant semantic cousins of the atonement concept, and not as illustrative of the saving work of God in Jesus. (Moreover, one gets the sense that the Evangelicals could hardly have been interested in such obtuse details.)

Such departures notwithstanding, it seems clear that QOD consistently held to both a completed atonement at the cross and a continuing atonement through Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. And in respect to a completed atonement at the cross, it seemed to have the stout backing of Ellen G White, as suggested in the following three statements, among many others cited in the book.

1) "Christ's sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The condition of the atonement had been fulfilled. The work for which He had come to this world had been accomplished. He had won the kingdom. He had wrested it from Satan and had become heir of all things."<sup>53</sup>

2) "When He offered Himself on the cross, a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people."<sup>54</sup>

3) "He [Christ] planted the cross between Heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. "It is enough," He said. "The Atonement is complete."<sup>55</sup>

Puzzled by such EGW affirmations of a completed atonement at the cross, Andreasen tells how, shortly after the Ballenger trial in 1905, he personally visited Ellen G. White's home in St. Helena, California, spending fully three months researching the original manuscripts of her published works. "This apparent discrepancy was one of the problems I wanted to have clarified," he said.<sup>56</sup>

According to him, he found "seven statements that the atonement was made on the cross [and] twenty-two statements that the final atonement was made in heaven." The lesson he drew from all this was "that I may not accept one set of statements and reject the other if I wish to arrive at truth."<sup>57</sup>

But no one listening to the vehemence of Andreasen's opposition to QOD on that very point would ever suspect that he'd once come to terms with it. Indeed, in one of his most extraordinary statements on the subject, he comes close to belittling the cross, and goes to lengths that it would have been sheer folly for the church to have followed him. "Dreadful as were the sufferings on the cross," he wrote, "they did not begin to compare with the sufferings of God from the time sin first entered in heaven.... There [on the cross] men saw the Son suffer. But the millenniums of sufferings which had gone before they did not see. *What men saw was a sample of the suffering of God, which had gone on for ages and which constitutes the real cost of sin.*"<sup>58</sup> Expressing similar sentiments in another place, Andreasen contended that "our salvation was not accomplished by a few hours of sufferings, dreadful as they were."<sup>59</sup> Then he makes this truly startling statement: "Let not the cross hide from us the deeper aspects of the atonement, which includes the cross as a revelation, but which roots [sic] go back untold ages."<sup>60</sup>

The danger of an unguarded theology is clear.

### **The "Final Generation" Concept**

Andreasen's stridency on the issue of the nature of Christ and the atonement had to do, as noted above, with the perfecting of the final generation of Christians, the 144,000. And no one with a sense of the growing worldliness and secularism in some sectors of the modern church would pooh-pooh the quest for righteousness and holiness, the fervent desire to become like Jesus. It's a matter of utmost importance and urgency.

But we need always to keep our theological wits about us. What are the dimensions of holiness? What does it involve? If we see holiness solely in the context of (isolationist) pietism, then we proceed in a certain direction, with its own requirements, stipulations, and emphases. However, if we understand holiness in a broader sense—a sense that includes our life and service in community with others, as well as a radical commitment to God in the midst of "a crooked and perverse generation," then we will tend to go in the direction described in the words of the ancient prophet: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8, NRSV).

Micah's is a brand of holiness anchored in kindness (mercy), in justice, in humility--three qualities that characterized the life and ministry of Jesus, and which He enunciated in His inaugural message at a Nazareth synagogue following His Temptation in the desert (Luke 4:17-21), a message anchored in the book of Isaiah, Micah's contemporary. It's holiness with an eye for justice; with a concern for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized. It's holiness with a sensitivity for ethics and equity. Without these ingredients, our holiness becomes repulsive in the eyes of God. His admonition to His people, as we find it in Amos, is that we "let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:23, 24, NKJV). And in the words of Ellen White: "Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians."<sup>61</sup>

It's important that we get our theology right. Defective theology is not a victimless enterprise. What we believe affects our children, other members of our immediate family, and the wider community--but particularly our children. To place before them unrealistic and

unbiblical standards and goals can discourage them, negatively radicalize them, and even destabilize them psychologically.

To bend theology to fit our own eschatological goals and objectives is neither sound nor prudent. We do not cut Jesus down to our own size for the purpose of using Him as example. That approach is as unproductive as it is unwarranted. He is our example, whether we wish it or not—our supreme example. But much as we need an example, we need a Savior more. And to have a Savior, we must maintain with Ellen G. White and the best theology in Christendom that He is in all things like unto us, sin only (experientially and inherently) excepted.

Our continuance as an authentic Christian communion could hang on just this one point.

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<sup>1</sup> “In March, 1955, Adventist leaders from the church’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., commenced a series of conversations with certain evangelical leaders, with the intent of providing an accurate account of the distinctive beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. The evangelicals involved were Walter R. Martin, George E. Cannon, and (later) Donald G. Barnhouse. Martin, a Southern Baptist Clergyman, was a Ph.D candidate at New York University, preparing a book against Seventh-day Adventists. George Cannon was a professor of theology on the faculty of Nyack Missionary College, New York. Donald Barnhouse was then a popular radio preacher in Philadelphia, minister of a large Presbyterian church in the same city, and editor in chief of *Eternity* magazine. (See Barnhouse, “Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?” *Eternity*, September 1956, 6; T. E. Unruh, “The Seventh-day Adventist-Evangelical conferences of 1955-1956,” *Adventist Heritage* 4 (Winter 1977), 35-37, 39....

“On the Adventist side were LeRoy E. Froom, W. E. Read, T. E. Unruh, and (later) Roy A. Anderson. These were all well-known Adventist ministers. Anderson was then editor of *Ministry*...; Unruh was president of the East Pennsylvania Conference...; and served as moderator of the meetings; Read was a field secretary of the General conference...; and Froom was a prominent Adventist church historian, whose monumental four-volume *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* had so impressed Martin that the latter specially requested his presence as one of the participants.” (See T. E. Unruh, “Adventist-Evangelical conferences,” 35, 37, 39”; Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Three Approaches in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* [Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 1] [Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981, 174, n. 2] ). In several areas of this report, I borrow from my doctoral dissertation (now out of print)--occasionally without attribution (in those instances where the borrowed portions are insubstantial or overly indirect. All references identified simply as “Adams” will be to this work).

For a more recent summary of the historical background of QOD, including some of its “political” and theological ramifications, see George Knight’s introduction in *Questions on Doctrine* (Annotated Edition), ed. George Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), xiii-xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> See note 1.

<sup>3</sup> *DA*, 49, 117.

<sup>4</sup> *RH*, April 5, 1906.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), vol. 1, 390.

<sup>6</sup> *YI* Sept. 8, 1898; 5BC 1117.

<sup>7</sup> *YI* April 25, 1901; 5BC 1108.

<sup>8</sup> 1SM 253.

<sup>9</sup> *YI*, June 2, 1898.

<sup>10</sup> *DA*, 117.

<sup>11</sup> *RH*, July 28, 1874.

<sup>12</sup> *DA*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> QOD’s major emphasis is on *sacrificial* or *substitutionary* atonement (see, for example, pp. 352, 353). It also speaks, in passing, about *the satisfaction of God’s justice*, hinting at the historic Satisfaction Theory of the atonement (353).

<sup>14</sup> Adams, 165.

<sup>15</sup> see Adams, 166

<sup>16</sup> I have noted elsewhere (see Adams, 207, n. 1) the possibility that he could have taken umbrage that, as one of the church's leading theologians for decades, he'd not been consulted in regard to the conversations with the Evangelicals. One reason for the slight, some think, centered around recent financial and other misunderstandings with church leaders in connection with a General Conference Sabbath School department project that had gone sour (see *ibid.*) Another reason might have been the simple fact that Andreasen had by then retired—though, given his reputed interest in some of the very issues on the conferees' agenda, that particular reason may be considered weak. It would not be farfetched to suspect that a reason for the snub was precisely Andreasen's reputed expertise in areas under discussion. His views on certain key points would have been well known to the Adventist conferees, who, accordingly, perhaps feared that his inclusion had the potential of muddying the uncertain waters. The listing of no fewer than five of Andreasen's books (including *Hebrews*) among "Representative Adventist Doctrinal Literature" at the back of QOD may have been a sop to the retired professor for any perceived rejection.

<sup>17</sup> See Adams, 207, 208.

<sup>18</sup> Adams, 180.

<sup>19</sup> This word was not in the QOD document, so far as I know, but was used elsewhere by a QOD participant, as we will see below.

<sup>20</sup> Adams, 202.

<sup>21</sup> Adams, 204.

<sup>22</sup> Adams, 205.

<sup>23</sup> Adams, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Barnhouse, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches*: "Was Christ Exempt?" 7; cf. QOD 383. These "Letters" from Andreasen are part of a large body of (mimeographed) materials, prepared in the last six years of his life (between 1956 and 1962), dealing with the sanctuary and the atonement, and largely in reaction to the Adventist-Evangelical conversations.

For more on these documents, see Adams, 170, n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters*: "Was Christ Exempt?" 7; cf. Adams, 210.

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*: "The Atonement," 15.

<sup>28</sup> Adams, 212, 211.

<sup>29</sup> Adams, 212, 213.

<sup>30</sup> Andreasen, "Atonement VII," 4, 5. This document was part of the large body of mimeographed materials written by Andreasen between 1956 and 1962.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters*: "The Atonement," 7.

<sup>32</sup> "The Apostacy" (sic), 1.

<sup>33</sup> See *Letters*: "Attempted Tampering," 11, 12; *Letters*: "A Resume," 8-11; *Letters*: "Why Not a Hearing? Inherited Passions," 2-10. (Cf. Adams 175, n. 0.)

<sup>34</sup> "Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine—The Truth about Seventh-day Adventists (Martin)," October 1960, 2, my personal files; cf. Andreasen to R. R. Bietz, *Without Fear*, 179, 180; "Suspension of Credentials of M. L. Andreasen," Minutes, GC Officers and [North American Division} Union Presidents Council, 6 April 1961, 9 (EGW Research Center, Andrews University).

<sup>35</sup> "The Living Witness," 2.

<sup>36</sup> Donald G Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?" *Eternity*, Sept. 1956, 6.

<sup>37</sup> It has always been a matter of curiosity to me, however, as to who exactly was conceived to be included among the "lunatic fringe"? Was it ever meant to include people like Andreasen? If so, then why would the QOD principals list no less than five of his books among its catalogue of "Representative Adventist Doctrinal Literature"? Did the remark come rather early in the game, before those who made it learned where Andreasen and others like him stood on the issues? Also, why would leaders of the stature of the QOD participants make that statement, unless they genuinely felt that people holding those views stood on the fringes of the church's theology? At the very least, they had to have believed (naively or not) that the position they themselves held was the prevailing view within the church. (This would not be to say that the variant views in question had not always been present in the church, but rather that they probably had not previously been brought forward in any significant way.) In the words of Unruh, in his very useful summary of the whole QOD affair, the participants believed they were "clarifying and amplifying the doctrines most generally believed by contemporary Seventh-day Adventists" ("Adventist-Evangelical Conferences," 44).

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<sup>38</sup> Andreason, *Letters*: “Was Christ Exempt?” 7)

<sup>39</sup> *Letters*: “Why Not a Hearing? Inherited Passions,” 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Letters*: “The Incarnation. Was Christ Exempt?” 7.

<sup>41</sup> “The Atonement, IX,” 1.

<sup>42</sup> DA 530.

<sup>43</sup> YI, October 13, 1898; 1SM 244.

<sup>44</sup> 5BC 1127; italics supplied.

<sup>45</sup> *RH*, Feb. 18, 1890.

<sup>46</sup> Letter 97, 1898; 7ABC 453.

<sup>47</sup> *DA*, 266; QOD 660. Italics supplied.

<sup>48</sup> 5BC 1128, 1129. Italics supplied. (Cf. QOD 652).

<sup>49</sup> Froom, “The Priestly Application of the Atoning Act,” *Ministry*, February 1957, 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ministry*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> The citations on page 354, for example. Here QOD seeks wider Christian backing for the view of a *full atonement at the cross and a continuing atonement* through the present work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Even if not taken out of context, the support seems weak and unconvincing.

<sup>52</sup> See *Letters*: “The Atonement,” 9, 10.

<sup>53</sup> AA 29; cf. QOD 387.

<sup>54</sup> ST, June 28, 1899; 7ABC 459; cf. QOD 663

<sup>55</sup> *RH*, Sept. 24, 1901; 7ABC 459; cf. QOD 663.

<sup>56</sup> “The Atonement, IX,” 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Letters*: “The Atonement,” 12.

<sup>58</sup> “The Atonement,” 15 February 1957, 4.

<sup>59</sup> “Atonement IX,” 10.

<sup>60</sup> “The Atonement,” 15 February 1957, 4. Note, however, that Andreason had expressed this view long before his crisis with church leaders (see *The Sabbath: Which Day and Why?* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1942), 242-245).

<sup>61</sup> DA 504.

## **Theology of *Questions on Doctrine*: Issues Surrounding the Nature of Christ and the Atonement**

Roy Adams

This chapter assumes that the basic background and history of QOD would have been elaborated in earlier pages of this document, and so no formal attention is given to those aspects of the book, except as they become necessary for the development of the present theme.

Adventists are no strangers to opposition and ridicule--these having been part and parcel of the church's experience from the beginning. Sooner or later, however, every organization grows tired of needless misunderstanding, and seizes any opportunity to provide a correct image of itself.

For the Adventist Church, such an opportunity came through a series of conversations with certain Evangelicals in the mid 1950s.<sup>1</sup> It would be easy to fault the church at the time for what may seem (from our distance) an over-eagerness to prove to these representatives (who do they think they are?) that we are authentic Christians. But since polemicist Walter Martin<sup>2</sup> (with partial and prejudiced information) was prepared to write about us anyway, prudence suggested that the church do what it could to represent itself in as correct a manner as possible.

I have divided this summary into four parts: 1) QOD's position on the nature of Christ; 2) its position on the atonement; 3) the resulting reaction and controversy; and 4) an assessment and critique.

### **QOD on the Nature of Christ**

QOD takes the position that while Jesus "ever remained the blameless Son of God," His humanity was "real and genuine." "He hungered and thirsted and was weary. He needed food and rest and was refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man, craving human sympathy and needing divine assistance" (QOD 52).

Then follow all the usual descriptives: He was tempted; was touched with the feelings of our infirmities; experienced "the various stages of growth, like any other member of the race; was obedient to His parents; was subject to common human emotions (sorrow, pain); and as a homeless wanderer, had no place to lay His head. (QOD 52).

All the while, however, Christ retained His deity. And though coming in the "likeness" of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), He, as the second Adam, did not possess a single taint of our sinful propensities and passions (QOD 52). Yes, there was "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6); yes, He bore our iniquities (Isa. 53:11); and yes, God "made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). (QOD 56). But, says the book, "whatever ... [that last statement] means, it certainly does *not* mean that our Immaculate Lord *became a sinner*." (QOD 56).



It's at this point, in its effort (as it were) to shield Jesus, that QOD steps on precarious ground—a peril facing anyone, regardless of their particular view, who ventures unto this terrain. Commenting on an Ellen G. White statement (cited on page 59) that Jesus “identified Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our failings,” QOD doubles back to Isaiah's statement that Jesus “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows (Isa 53:4, KJV) (or in Matthew's rendering: “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses).

“He did *bear* all this,” QOD admits, and then goes on to put the following question: “Could it not be that He bore this vicariously... , just as He bore the sins of the whole world?” (QOD 59). “These weaknesses, frailties, infirmities, failings,” it says, “are things which we, with our sinful, fallen natures, have to bear. To us they are natural, inherent, but when He bore them, He took them not as something innately His, but He bore them as our substitute. He bore them in His perfect, sinless nature” (QOD 59). “It could hardly be construed” from these scriptures, says QOD, “that Jesus was diseased or that He experienced the frailties to which our fallen human nature is heir” (QOD 59).

But in what sense can it be said that Jesus bore our weaknesses, frailties, and sicknesses “vicariously”? How does Jesus experience the frailty of hunger vicariously? Is that to say that His hunger pangs were unreal? Did he not actually experience pain? And fatigue? Was His feeling of sorrow not genuine?

We see where QOD is heading with this when we understand that it all is a build-up to protecting the integrity of Christ's moral and spiritual nature. “Christ bore all this vicariously,” QOD maintains, “just as vicariously He bore the iniquities of us all” (QOD 59, 60). And having laid that foundation, it now feels ready to entertain a certain group of statements from Ellen G. White it probably saw as somewhat touchy--statements like the following (which it lists in summary form at the top of page 60):

“We read that Jesus took ‘our nature’ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25); He ‘took upon Himself human nature’ (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128); ...He took ‘our fallen nature’ (*Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office*, p. 13, May 26, 1896); He took ‘man's nature in its fallen condition’ (*Signs of the Times*, June 9, 1898).”

QOD's approach to such statements was to assert that “whatever Jesus took was not His *intrinsically* or *innately*. His taking the burden of our inherited weakness and failings, even after four thousand years of accumulated infirmities and degeneracy,<sup>3</sup> did not in the slightest degree taint His human nature” (QOD 61; italics supplied).

QOD seems nervous where Ellen G. White isn't. “Christ did not make believe take human nature,” she says (in a statement cited in QOD 653), “He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature.”<sup>4</sup> She seems to feel no need to indulge in theological gymnastics (with terms like “vicarious” or “innate”), but instead offers clear affirmations, followed by equally clear-cut caveats--and those who accept the affirmations should be equally willing also to allow the caveats.

Her statements, as cited on pages 60 and 61, are (in part), as follows: “He took ‘the nature but not the sinfulness of man.’—*Signs of the Times*, May 29, 1901. He took ‘man's nature in its

fallen condition,’ but ‘...did not in the least participate in its sin.’—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131. ‘He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions.’—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 202. In ‘identifying Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our feelings, ...He was a mighty petitioner, *not possessing the passions of our human, fallen nature.*’—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 508, 509. (Italics supplied). ‘We should have no misgivings in regard to *the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ.*’—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131. (Italics supplied.) The Son of God ‘became like one of us, *except in sin.*’—*The Youth’s Instructor*, Oct. 20, 1886. (Italics supplied.)”

The difficulty and delicateness of the subject should steer us away from passing harsh judgments on those with variant views. But QOD’s “vicarious” approach to the issue (to put it that way) is as confusing as it is unwarranted. Just one thing Ellen G. White wanted to make clear—and one thing only. We see it in that last statement above, quoted from the *Youth’s Instructor*. She said: Jesus “became like one of us, *except in sin.*” In that single remark, this uneducated lady cuts to the chase and confounds much of our heated debates, falling squarely in sync with the best theology in Christendom. The sentiments are right out of the Creed of Chalcedon (so to speak), penned more than 1400 years earlier, where (speaking of Jesus) it says: “...in all things like unto us, sin only excepted.”<sup>5</sup> And it leaves us free to say that Jesus took, *actually took*, our infirmities, our weaknesses, our nature—not vicariously, but in actuality. And we can say all this without equivocation, so long as we understand, with not a single iota of compromise, that *nothing He took amounted to sin—either experientially or inherently.*

It may come as a surprise to many Adventists who’ve been following discussions on the nature of Christ within the church to discover that words like “pre-lapsarian” and “post-lapsarian” are not common terms in Christian theology. One finds expressions like “sub-lapsarian” and “supra-lapsarian” used in connection with predestination in Calvinistic theology. And there is, of course, the concept of the “lapsed”—a term describing Christians who fell away (lapsed) during times of persecution in the early centuries. But the expressions “pre-lapsarian” and “post-lapsarian” seem to have found their widest use among Adventists, perhaps a legacy from the Christian Connection roots of some of our early pioneers.

In regard to the incarnation, pre-lapsarians believe that Christ took the nature of Adam *before* he fell (in other words, before he lapsed). Post-lapsarians believe just the opposite—that Jesus took the nature of humans after the fall. On which side did QOD come down?

One way to approach the question is to observe which statements of Ellen G White it selected for display. On the one hand, one finds a group of EGW assertions that, on their face, seem to have a pre-lapsarian leaning. Notice, for example, the following (in each case, the emphasis is supplied):

- 1) “*No one, looking upon the childlike countenance, shining with animation, could say that Christ was just like other children.* He was God in human flesh.”<sup>6</sup> (QOD 649).
- 2) “[Christ] vanquished Satan *in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory.* (Incidentally, what appears as a pre-lapsarian statement here loses force as soon as the following

sentence is added: “The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human [not specifically in Adam’s] nature.”<sup>7</sup> (QOD 651)

3) “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 ... could obey every divine requirement.*”<sup>8</sup> (QOD 650)

4) “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.”<sup>9</sup> (QOD 650)

But then, there are other statements that would put her clearly on the post-lapsarian side:

1) “But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body... It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in *physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.*”<sup>10</sup> (QOD 652).

2) Christ “took human nature, and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race.”<sup>11</sup> (QOD 656).

3) “It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. *But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity.*”<sup>12</sup> (QOD 656, italics supplied).

In all fairness, then--on the basis of the EGW statements QOD selected for display, we may conclude that the book managed to stay clear of adopting one side or the other in the pre-lapsarian-post-lapsarian debate. This is an important point to note, in view of the heatedness of the decades-old controversy over this issue.

### **QOD on the Atonement**

The atonement is a broad subject. Rivers of ink have been employed over the centuries in attempts adequately to describe God’s saving work in Jesus. This treatment stays clear of the bulk of all this, restricting itself to aspects of the doctrine specifically elaborated in QOD, particularly those elements that have given rise to controversy within the Adventist Church.<sup>13</sup>

A major issue for the Evangelicals in conversation with Adventists was *whether our emphasis on a heavenly sanctuary ministry meant that Adventists advocated an incomplete atonement at the cross.*

QOD commences with the use of the terms for “atonement” in the Bible—*katallage* in the New Testament; *kaphar* in the Old. Given the wide variation of views on the subject within Christianity, it argues, it’s always important to ascertaining “what aspect of the atonement is

under consideration” in order to arrive at correct conclusions (see QOD 342). “In theological circles,” it says, “the term...has assumed a technical meaning and is generally used to describe the redeeming effect to Christ’s incarnation, sufferings, and death” (342).

On the basis of this definition, many Christians hold the position that “a completed atonement was made on the cross,” meaning that “on Calvary, the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice...was offered for our salvation” (QOD 342). Far from taking exception to this view, QOD asserts that “with this concept all true Christians readily and heartily agree” (QOD 342). Thus QOD speaks of a “fully completed atoning sacrifice made by Christ on Calvary” (QOD 352) and argues (on the basis of 1 John 2:2) that “the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ ... was *offered and completed* on the cross...” (QOD 350).

But while “fully agree[ing] with those who stress a completed atonement on the cross in the sense of an all-sufficient, once-for-all atonement sacrifice for sin” (QOD 342), QOD would broaden the definition of the concept to include what transpires post-cross in the context of Christ’s continuing priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, harking back to the Old Testament sacrificial system. Just as “it took four gospel writers to portray the life of Christ on earth, so in the Old Testament it took various sacrifices, or phases of the sacrificial work, to represent the all-inclusive work of Jesus as the great antitypical sacrifice for the redemption of a lost race” (QOD 357).

Emphasizing that Adventists believe both in a completed atonement on the cross and a continuing atonement in the heavenly sanctuary, QOD presents the atonement as an act that is past (the cross), a transaction that is present (Christ’s heavenly ministry), and a reality that is yet future (the restoration of all things in Christ). (See the QOD chapter beginning on 349). “The mighty sweep of the atonement, in its provisions and its efficacy,” the book says, “is ...vastly more comprehensive than many have thought” (QOD 351). “The atonement ...involves not only the transcendent act of the cross, but also the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice which are continually being applied to needy man. And this will continue on to the close of human probation” (QOD 352).

Accordingly, Christ’s continuing priestly ministry is of utmost importance for us on the experiential level. “We should remember,” says QOD, “that men are not automatically, involuntarily, impersonally, or universally saved en masse..., [but] “must individually accept of grace....” So “while Christ died *provisionally and potentially* for all men, and nothing more can be added, yet His death is *actually and ultimately efficacious* for those *only* who individually accept and avail themselves of its benefits” (QOD 351).

Emphasis on “this wider concept” of the atonement, says the book, “in no way detracts from the full efficacy of the death of the Son of God, once for all for the sins of men. [And] it is unfortunate that a lack of definition of terms so often leads to misunderstanding on the greatest theme of the Christian message” (QOD 348)

## **Reaction and Controversy**

Every cause needs a champion. And it's probably correct to say that absent the agitation by M. L. Andreasen, *Questions on Doctrine*, for all the effort put into it, would have created hardly a stir in the Adventist Church. After all, upwards of 97% of the book (to use a purely arbitrary figure) constitutes basic Adventist teaching, with wide acceptance within the church. It was the vociferous objections by M. L. Andreasen on the disputed 3% that quickly eliminated the book's yawn factor, catapulting it to icon status, with ardent supporters on the one hand and determined opponents on the other.

Accordingly, I will focus here on Andreasen as the symbol of opposition to the document among Adventists, an opposition that continues to this day through his modern followers and sympathizers.

Adventist evangelist Albion Fox Ballenger got into trouble with church leaders for, among other things, his attempt to make the sanctuary and other distinctly Adventist doctrines more evangelically friendly, more "gospel oriented." For his troubles, the well-meaning preacher was summoned before a special committee appointed to look into his theology. His trial was conducted in connection with a General Conference session in 1905, the first in Washington, D.C. Andreasen, only a young minister at the time, was not part of the trial committee, of course. But (by his own account) he was able to eavesdrop on the pre-dawn proceedings, undetected, by standing on the shoulder of another young minister outside an open upper window in the trial room.<sup>14</sup>

I point out in my doctoral dissertation that it is ironic that Andreasen, who traced his life-long interest in the sanctuary/atonement doctrine to that trial event, would himself come into conflict with church leaders 50 years later over some of the very issues for which Ballenger was tried--this time with the church championing key elements of Ballenger's 1905 position, namely, the attempt to express Adventist doctrine in more evangelically friendly terms; and the belief in a completed atonement at the cross.<sup>15</sup>

The reasons for Andreasen's intense polemics against Adventist church leaders over the publication of QOD are complex.<sup>16</sup> But we get at the heart of the issue only when we understand that to his mind, fundamental, non-negotiable Adventist doctrinal positions had come under threat in these conversations.<sup>17</sup>

The areas in QOD he found most reprehensible centered around *the nature of Christ and the atonement*, two issues that, for him, lay at the very foundation of Adventist faith and identity. Not coincidentally, these two areas also happened to be closely related to a key theological concern Andreasen had nurtured all his life--namely, *the cosmic vindication of God through the absolute perfection of an eschatological Remnant, a condition upon which the coming of Jesus depends*.<sup>18</sup> For Andreasen, the cleansing of the sanctuary involves the purification of that final Remnant, and their achievement of sinless perfection would spell the experiential culmination of the atonement.

It's against this background that we can appreciate the strength of his reaction to any notion of a completed (let alone "final"<sup>19</sup>) atonement at the cross. For him, the rapprochement with the Evangelicals constituted "a sinister attempt on the part of highly placed Adventist officials to compromise...the very essence of Adventism, the atonement."<sup>20</sup>

Andreasen divided the atonement into three parts, of which only the *second* involved Jesus' suffering and death. In the *first* part (comprising His earthly life and ministry), Christ demonstrated that sin could be completely resisted and overcome; that complete victory is possible.<sup>21</sup>

The *third* phase of the atonement, occurring in the heavenly sanctuary, involves the purification and cleansing of the Remnant, Christ demonstrating in their lives that His victory over sin *was not unique*, but is repeatable by them.<sup>22</sup>

The rationale for Andreasen's contention that Jesus' victory is repeatable by the final generation had everything to do with his perception of the kind of humanity Jesus took. We see this in his comment on Hebrews 10:19, 20, in which he maintained that Christ's body needed to be "cleansed and purified from every defilement" before He could pass "through the curtain" into the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>23</sup> And just as Jesus needed to be purified and cleansed, just so His followers, having the same body, need to undergo a similar purification and cleansing. (The problems with this view are enormous if we are to understand Jesus' whole mental apparatus as an essential part of His body.)

Against that background, Andreasen considered key QOD statements on the nature of Christ to be utterly reckless and irresponsible. As regards the nature of Christ during the incarnation, for example, Donald G. Barnhouse, a participant in the Adventist-Evangelical conversations, "reported that Adventist leaders had affirmed that it was 'sinless, holy and perfect,' and that any other position was 'completely repugnant' to them."<sup>24</sup>

Andreasen was deeply offended. As he understood it, "Christ in His incarnation took upon Himself sinful human nature. He was not, as [QOD had]... affirmed, 'exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam'"<sup>25</sup> "For him, no 'heresy' could be 'more harmful' than that which asserted that 'God extended special favors and exemptions to Christ.'"<sup>26</sup> In effect, such a theory placed an indictment on God 'as the author of a scheme to deceive both men and Satan.'<sup>27</sup>

"If the notion that Christ was 'exempt' from 'inherited passions and pollutions' destroyed the *first* phase of the atonement, the idea that the atonement at the cross was 'final' [or even "complete"] destroyed the *third* phase..., that transpiring in the most holy place."<sup>28</sup> For as Andreasen saw it, that last phase of the atonement, a "distinctively Adventist" teaching, is critical, and cannot be jettisoned from Adventist theology without severe damage. For it's during this phase that Christ would fulfill His promise to make us overcomers.<sup>29</sup> The work of atonement cannot be finished without that final demonstration of perfection in the 144,000, "the crown and pride of the finished mediatorial work of Christ."<sup>30</sup>

Andreasen was shocked to see "the church of the living God," commissioned to carry the gospel to the final generation, begging for entrance into the evangelical fold. "This is more than apostasy," he said, it is "giving up Adventism," the "rape of a whole people: a treasonous denial of "God's leading in the past."<sup>31</sup> It is "the omega apostasy" (sic), he said.<sup>32</sup> "A confrontation quickly developed between him and high-ranking Adventist leaders, particularly the then president of the General Conference, Reuben R. Figuhr; and a series of strongly worded letters were exchanged" between them.<sup>33</sup>

“As the conflict grew, Andreasen came to see himself as the target of suppression on the part of the church’s top leadership” His credentials were suspended for what the GC committee called “grave and false charges against the general leadership” of the church, and for Andreasen’s refusal to respond to the appeals of church leaders. As might be expected, Andreasen reacted sharply to the GC action, “declaring it ‘illegal’ and ‘void,’” and called for the “impeachment” of the General Conference president.<sup>34</sup>

Andreasen felt utterly convicted on this point. In his view, no one can believe in a final atonement at the cross and remain an Adventist, for a final atonement at the cross automatically annuls the heavenly sanctuary atonement commencing in 1844. Said Andreasen: “Our message stands or falls with the question of the atonement.”<sup>35</sup> In the same article he charged top Adventist leaders with “base apostasy” (sic), and called upon them to either “repent or resign.”

### Assessment and Critique

Perhaps it was inevitable that QOD and its participants, engaged in as wide-ranging a project as these conversations turned out to be, would at some point commit a blunder or two—unintentional or not. I note here three such instances.

*The first* had to do with the use of the expression “lunatic fringe” by the Adventist conferees to describe Adventists who held to a position on the nature of Christ different from theirs.<sup>36</sup> Such pejorative characterizations were exceedingly unproductive and led to much bad blood between them and their detractors.<sup>37</sup>

*Another faux pas* (as some would consider it) was the subhead chosen for a subsection of appendix B listing a group of Ellen G White’s statements on Christ’s humanity. “Took Sinless Human Nature,” it said ((p. 650).

Ironically, White herself never puts the three words (“sinless human nature”) together in any reference I could find. Indeed, among the citations collected under the heading in question is one statement in which she avers that Christ took “upon Himself man’s nature in its fallen condition” (QOD, 650). It would be rather difficult to make the case that taking “man’s nature in its fallen condition” is somehow equal to taking “sinless human nature.” (Incidentally—and this is also significant, neither did EGW ever use the expression “sinful human nature” to describe what Jesus assumed in the incarnation, even though Andreasen did not hesitate to brandish the expression in his conflict with the QOD conferees.<sup>38</sup>

### The Nature Jesus Took

The following statement (from QOD 383) gave Andreasen considerable grief. Speaking about Jesus, it says: “He could rightly be ‘chosen out of the people’ because He was ‘holy,

harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners' (Heb. 7:26). He came into humanity, not by natural generation, but by a miracle. His birth was supernatural; God was His Father. Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendents of Adam.... There was nothing in Him that responded to the evil one."

Andreasen was aghast! Christ was "not exempt from temptation," he argued. "A man may not *have* cancer, but does that mean that he is *immune* from it, exempt from it? Not at all. Next year he may be afflicted with it."<sup>39</sup> "There can be no heresy more harmful," he said.<sup>40</sup>

What I've noticed vis-à-vis White's nature-of-Christ statements, however, is precisely what gave Andreasen difficulty in respect to her atonement ones. "Apparent discrepancy" was the expression he used to characterize her atonement statements.<sup>41</sup> And we see a similar pattern in regard to her statements on Christ's nature. She could say on the one hand that "the divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life,"<sup>42</sup> and on the other that "the humanity of the Son of God is everything to us," "the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God."<sup>43</sup> Thus, she gives equal weight to both aspects.

Throughout her writings we see this balance. Some statements seem to give the impression that Christ is all like us; others emphasize the wide difference. Whereas QOD was at pains to affirm that Christ took our weaknesses and infirmities *vicariously*, she saw the situation otherwise. In one extraordinary statement, she mentions that Jesus "might have helped His human nature to withstand *the inroads of disease* by pouring from His divine nature vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. *But He humbled Himself to man's nature....* What humility was this!" (QOD 656).<sup>44</sup>

That statement seems to define, indirectly, much of what she meant when she speaks of Jesus taking on the weaknesses of human nature, and helps clarify her apparently pre-lapsarian comments. Here she indicates that Christ "might have," *but did not* help "His human nature to withstand the inroads of disease." He did not *pour* into his human nature "vitality and undecaying vigor" from his divine nature. This indicates that He was vulnerable to physical human weaknesses and disease. In another statement (cited in QOD 649), she indicates God's plan for human salvation "provided that Christ should know hunger, and poverty, and every phase of man's experience."<sup>45</sup>

As quoted in QOD 567, she makes it clear, however, that Christ "was born without a taint of sin...."<sup>46</sup> There'd be no point in making such a remark, except to distinguish His birth from that of all other humans since the fall. She makes that crystal clear when, after describing the "deep-rooted, deadly" "leprosy of sin" that has infected all of us, she says: "But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, *receives no pollution.*"<sup>47</sup>

No one, including those with the prophetic gift, speaks with the same tightness of language at all times and under all circumstances. So long as we perceive no misunderstanding of our words, we are content to carry on without taking any special precaution. But the moment someone expresses puzzlement about what they think they're hearing from us, we tighten our language to prevent any further misinterpretation.



That's undoubtedly what we see in her response to an Adventist Brother on one occasion—it's one of her most careful and definitive statements on the issue in question. Anchoring her remarks on Luke 1:31-35, among other scriptures, she wrote, as follows:

*“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. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.*

*“Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. His birth was a miracle of God.... [At this point she cites Luke 1:35: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”]*

*“These words do not refer to any human being, except to the Son of the infinite God. Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. ... The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.”<sup>48</sup>*

## **Handling the Atonement**

*The third of the three faux pas alluded to above came from L. E. Froom, one of QOD's authors. Writing in a church magazine, he let slip the word “final” in describing the atonement at the cross.<sup>49</sup> What Froom was trying to do, evidently, was to put to rest allegations that Adventists somehow regarded the transaction at the cross as insufficient. Thus he emphasized in the article that what happened there was “a single, transcendent act—once for all, all-sufficient, all-efficient, and never to be repeated.” It was in that sense that he conceived of it as “final.” But Andreasen found the apparent blunder too tempting to pass up, never mind that in the same article Froom was clear that the atonement could neither be “limited just to the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, nor to the ministry of Christ “in the sanctuary above....”<sup>50</sup>*

Adventists have the distinction of being the only Christian group to take seriously the anticipation of Christ's atoning sacrifice as depicted in the Old Testament sanctuary system. I find this both remarkable and puzzling, in view of the elaborate development of this concept of the atonement in the Book of Hebrews. In those instances where QOD seeks to bolster the Adventist position with citations from non-Adventist Christian theological sources, such support often comes across as tepid and ambiguous.<sup>51</sup>

Certain aspects of QOD's development of the subject of the atonement do seem a tad problematic. In one place, for instance--perhaps trying to prove too much, QOD launches into a discussion of the semantic range of "kaphar," a gratuitous exercise that led to what it saw as examples of *atonement without blood sacrifice*. Seizing upon such sentiments, its critics quickly accused it of advocating "bloodless atonement"--a controversy that led to the spilling of much needless ink and emotion.<sup>52</sup>

In a similar vein, QOD managed to come up with examples of atonement that leave one squirming. To use the vicious killing of Saul's descendents in reparation for Saul's earlier slaughter of the Gibeonites as a good example of atonement (see QOD 344, 345) is both puzzling and problematic. And to suggest that the violent action of Phinehas--however important in the history of Israel—is somehow illustrative of the work of Jesus (QOD 346) engenders unnecessary and uncomfortable questions. QOD might have done better to cite such examples (if it had to) as distant semantic cousins of the atonement concept, and not as illustrative of the saving work of God in Jesus. (Moreover, one gets the sense that the Evangelicals could hardly have been interested in such obtuse details.)

Such departures notwithstanding, it seems clear that QOD consistently held to both a completed atonement at the cross and a continuing atonement through Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. And in respect to a completed atonement at the cross, it seemed to have the stout backing of Ellen G White, as suggested in the following three statements, among many others cited in the book.

1) "Christ's sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The condition of the atonement had been fulfilled. The work for which He had come to this world had been accomplished. He had won the kingdom. He had wrested it from Satan and had become heir of all things."<sup>53</sup>

2) "When He offered Himself on the cross, a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people."<sup>54</sup>

3) "He [Christ] planted the cross between Heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. "It is enough," He said. "The Atonement is complete."<sup>55</sup>

Puzzled by such EGW affirmations of a completed atonement at the cross, Andreasen tells how, shortly after the Ballenger trial in 1905, he personally visited Ellen G. White's home in St. Helena, California, spending fully three months researching the original manuscripts of her published works. "This apparent discrepancy was one of the problems I wanted to have clarified," he said.<sup>56</sup>

According to him, he found "seven statements that the atonement was made on the cross [and] twenty-two statements that the final atonement was made in heaven." The lesson he drew from all this was "that I may not accept one set of statements and reject the other if I wish to arrive at truth."<sup>57</sup>

But no one listening to the vehemence of Andreasen's opposition to QOD on that very point would ever suspect that he'd once come to terms with it. Indeed, in one of his most extraordinary statements on the subject, he comes close to belittling the cross, and goes to lengths that it would have been sheer folly for the church to have followed him. "Dreadful as were the sufferings on the cross," he wrote, "they did not begin to compare with the sufferings of God from the time sin first entered in heaven.... There [on the cross] men saw the Son suffer. But the millenniums of sufferings which had gone before they did not see. *What men saw was a sample of the suffering of God, which had gone on for ages and which constitutes the real cost of sin.*"<sup>58</sup> Expressing similar sentiments in another place, Andreasen contended that "our salvation was not accomplished by a few hours of sufferings, dreadful as they were."<sup>59</sup> Then he makes this truly startling statement: "Let not the cross hide from us the deeper aspects of the atonement, which includes the cross as a revelation, but which roots [sic] go back untold ages."<sup>60</sup>

The danger of an unguarded theology is clear.

### **The "Final Generation" Concept**

Andreasen's stridency on the issue of the nature of Christ and the atonement had to do, as noted above, with the perfecting of the final generation of Christians, the 144,000. And no one with a sense of the growing worldliness and secularism in some sectors of the modern church would pooh-pooh the quest for righteousness and holiness, the fervent desire to become like Jesus. It's a matter of utmost importance and urgency.

But we need always to keep our theological wits about us. What are the dimensions of holiness? What does it involve? If we see holiness solely in the context of (isolationist) pietism, then we proceed in a certain direction, with its own requirements, stipulations, and emphases. However, if we understand holiness in a broader sense—a sense that includes our life and service in community with others, as well as a radical commitment to God in the midst of "a crooked and perverse generation," then we will tend to go in the direction described in the words of the ancient prophet: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8, NRSV).

Micah's is a brand of holiness anchored in kindness (mercy), in justice, in humility--three qualities that characterized the life and ministry of Jesus, and which He enunciated in His inaugural message at a Nazareth synagogue following His Temptation in the desert (Luke 4:17-21), a message anchored in the book of Isaiah, Micah's contemporary. It's holiness with an eye for justice; with a concern for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized. It's holiness with a sensitivity for ethics and equity. Without these ingredients, our holiness becomes repulsive in the eyes of God. His admonition to His people, as we find it in Amos, is that we "let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:23, 24, NKJV). And in the words of Ellen White: "Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians."<sup>61</sup>

It's important that we get our theology right. Defective theology is not a victimless enterprise. What we believe affects our children, other members of our immediate family, and the wider community--but particularly our children. To place before them unrealistic and

unbiblical standards and goals can discourage them, negatively radicalize them, and even destabilize them psychologically.

To bend theology to fit our own eschatological goals and objectives is neither sound nor prudent. We do not cut Jesus down to our own size for the purpose of using Him as example. That approach is as unproductive as it is unwarranted. He is our example, whether we wish it or not—our supreme example. But much as we need an example, we need a Savior more. And to have a Savior, we must maintain with Ellen G. White and the best theology in Christendom that He is in all things like unto us, sin only (experientially and inherently) excepted.

Our continuance as an authentic Christian communion could hang on just this one point.

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<sup>1</sup> “In March, 1955, Adventist leaders from the church’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., commenced a series of conversations with certain evangelical leaders, with the intent of providing an accurate account of the distinctive beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. The evangelicals involved were Walter R. Martin, George E. Cannon, and (later) Donald G. Barnhouse. Martin, a Southern Baptist Clergyman, was a Ph.D candidate at New York University, preparing a book against Seventh-day Adventists. George Cannon was a professor of theology on the faculty of Nyack Missionary College, New York. Donald Barnhouse was then a popular radio preacher in Philadelphia, minister of a large Presbyterian church in the same city, and editor in chief of *Eternity* magazine. (See Barnhouse, “Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?” *Eternity*, September 1956, 6; T. E. Unruh, “The Seventh-day Adventist-Evangelical conferences of 1955-1956,” *Adventist Heritage* 4 (Winter 1977), 35-37, 39....

“On the Adventist side were LeRoy E. Froom, W. E. Read, T. E. Unruh, and (later) Roy A. Anderson. These were all well-known Adventist ministers. Anderson was then editor of *Ministry*...; Unruh was president of the East Pennsylvania Conference...; and served as moderator of the meetings; Read was a field secretary of the General conference...; and Froom was a prominent Adventist church historian, whose monumental four-volume *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* had so impressed Martin that the latter specially requested his presence as one of the participants.” (See T. E. Unruh, “Adventist-Evangelical conferences,” 35, 37, 39”; Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Three Approaches in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* [Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 1] [Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981, 174, n. 2] ). In several areas of this report, I borrow from my doctoral dissertation (now out of print)--occasionally without attribution (in those instances where the borrowed portions are insubstantial or overly indirect. All references identified simply as “Adams” will be to this work).

For a more recent summary of the historical background of QOD, including some of its “political” and theological ramifications, see George Knight’s introduction in *Questions on Doctrine* (Annotated Edition), ed. George Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), xiii-xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> See note 1.

<sup>3</sup> *DA*, 49, 117.

<sup>4</sup> *RH*, April 5, 1906.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), vol. 1, 390.

<sup>6</sup> *YI* Sept. 8, 1898; 5BC 1117.

<sup>7</sup> *YI* April 25, 1901; 5BC 1108.

<sup>8</sup> *ISM* 253.

<sup>9</sup> *YI*, June 2, 1898.

<sup>10</sup> *DA*, 117.

<sup>11</sup> *RH*, July 28, 1874.

<sup>12</sup> *DA*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> QOD’s major emphasis is on *sacrificial* or *substitutionary* atonement (see, for example, pp. 352, 353). It also speaks, in passing, about *the satisfaction of God’s* justice, hinting at the historic Satisfaction Theory of the atonement (353).

<sup>14</sup> Adams, 165.

<sup>15</sup> see Adams, 166

<sup>16</sup> I have noted elsewhere (see Adams, 207, n. 1) the possibility that he could have taken umbrage that, as one of the church's leading theologians for decades, he'd not been consulted in regard to the conversations with the Evangelicals. One reason for the slight, some think, centered around recent financial and other misunderstandings with church leaders in connection with a General Conference Sabbath School department project that had gone sour (see *ibid.*) Another reason might have been the simple fact that Andreasen had by then retired—though, given his reputed interest in some of the very issues on the conferees' agenda, that particular reason may be considered weak. It would not be farfetched to suspect that a reason for the snub was precisely Andreasen's reputed expertise in areas under discussion. His views on certain key points would have been well known to the Adventist conferees, who, accordingly, perhaps feared that his inclusion had the potential of muddying the uncertain waters. The listing of no fewer than five of Andreasen's books (including *Hebrews*) among "Representative Adventist Doctrinal Literature" at the back of QOD may have been a sop to the retired professor for any perceived rejection.

<sup>17</sup> See Adams, 207, 208.

<sup>18</sup> Adams, 180.

<sup>19</sup> This word was not in the QOD document, so far as I know, but was used elsewhere by a QOD participant, as we will see below.

<sup>20</sup> Adams, 202.

<sup>21</sup> Adams, 204.

<sup>22</sup> Adams, 205.

<sup>23</sup> Adams, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Barnhouse, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches*: "Was Christ Exempt?" 7; cf. QOD 383. These "Letters" from Andreasen are part of a large body of (mimeographed) materials, prepared in the last six years of his life (between 1956 and 1962), dealing with the sanctuary and the atonement, and largely in reaction to the Adventist-Evangelical conversations.

For more on these documents, see Adams, 170, n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters*: "Was Christ Exempt?" 7; cf. Adams, 210.

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*: "The Atonement," 15.

<sup>28</sup> Adams, 212, 211.

<sup>29</sup> Adams, 212, 213.

<sup>30</sup> Andreasen, "Atonement VII," 4, 5. This document was part of the large body of mimeographed materials written by Andreasen between 1956 and 1962.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters*: "The Atonement," 7.

<sup>32</sup> "The Apostacy" (sic), 1.

<sup>33</sup> See *Letters*: "Attempted Tampering," 11, 12; *Letters*: "A Resume," 8-11; *Letters*: "Why Not a Hearing? Inherited Passions," 2-10. (Cf. Adams 175, n. 0.)

<sup>34</sup> "Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine—The Truth about Seventh-day Adventists (Martin)," October 1960, 2, my personal files; cf. Andreasen to R. R. Bietz, *Without Fear*, 179, 180; "Suspension of Credentials of M. L. Andreasen," Minutes, GC Officers and [North American Division} Union Presidents Council, 6 April 1961, 9 (EGW Research Center, Andrews University).

<sup>35</sup> "The Living Witness," 2.

<sup>36</sup> Donald G Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?" *Eternity*, Sept. 1956, 6.

<sup>37</sup> It has always been a matter of curiosity to me, however, as to who exactly was conceived to be included among the "lunatic fringe"? Was it ever meant to include people like Andreasen? If so, then why would the QOD principals list no less than five of his books among its catalogue of "Representative Adventist Doctrinal Literature"? Did the remark come rather early in the game, before those who made it learned where Andreasen and others like him stood on the issues? Also, why would leaders of the stature of the QOD participants make that statement, unless they genuinely felt that people holding those views stood on the fringes of the church's theology? At the very least, they had to have believed (naively or not) that the position they themselves held was the prevailing view within the church. (This would not be to say that the variant views in question had not always been present in the church, but rather that they probably had not previously been brought forward in any significant way.) In the words of Unruh, in his very useful summary of the whole QOD affair, the participants believed they were "clarifying and amplifying the doctrines most generally believed by contemporary Seventh-day Adventists" ("Adventist-Evangelical Conferences," 44).

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<sup>38</sup> Andreasen, *Letters*: “Was Christ Exempt?” 7)

<sup>39</sup> *Letters*: “Why Not a Hearing? Inherited Passions,” 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Letters*: “The Incarnation. Was Christ Exempt?” 7.

<sup>41</sup> “The Atonement, IX,” 1.

<sup>42</sup> DA 530.

<sup>43</sup> YI, October 13, 1898; 1SM 244.

<sup>44</sup> 5BC 1127; italics supplied.

<sup>45</sup> *RH*, Feb. 18, 1890.

<sup>46</sup> Letter 97, 1898; 7ABC 453.

<sup>47</sup> *DA*, 266; QOD 660. Italics supplied.

<sup>48</sup> 5BC 1128, 1129. Italics supplied. (Cf. QOD 652).

<sup>49</sup> Froom, “The Priestly Application of the Atoning Act,” *Ministry*, February 1957, 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ministry*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> The citations on page 354, for example. Here QOD seeks wider Christian backing for the view of a *full atonement at the cross and a continuing atonement* through the present work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Even if not taken out of context, the support seems weak and unconvincing.

<sup>52</sup> See *Letters*: “The Atonement,” 9, 10.

<sup>53</sup> AA 29; cf. QOD 387.

<sup>54</sup> ST, June 28, 1899; 7ABC 459; cf. QOD 663

<sup>55</sup> *RH*, Sept. 24, 1901; 7ABC 459; cf. QOD 663.

<sup>56</sup> “The Atonement, IX,” 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Letters*: “The Atonement,” 12.

<sup>58</sup> “The Atonement,” 15 February 1957, 4.

<sup>59</sup> “Atonement IX,” 10.

<sup>60</sup> “The Atonement,” 15 February 1957, 4. Note, however, that Andreasen had expressed this view long before his crisis with church leaders (see *The Sabbath: Which Day and Why?* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1942), 242-245).

<sup>61</sup> DA 504.