

Sacrifice of Love



Collegiate Quarterly

January-March 1983

A North American Youth Ministries Publication

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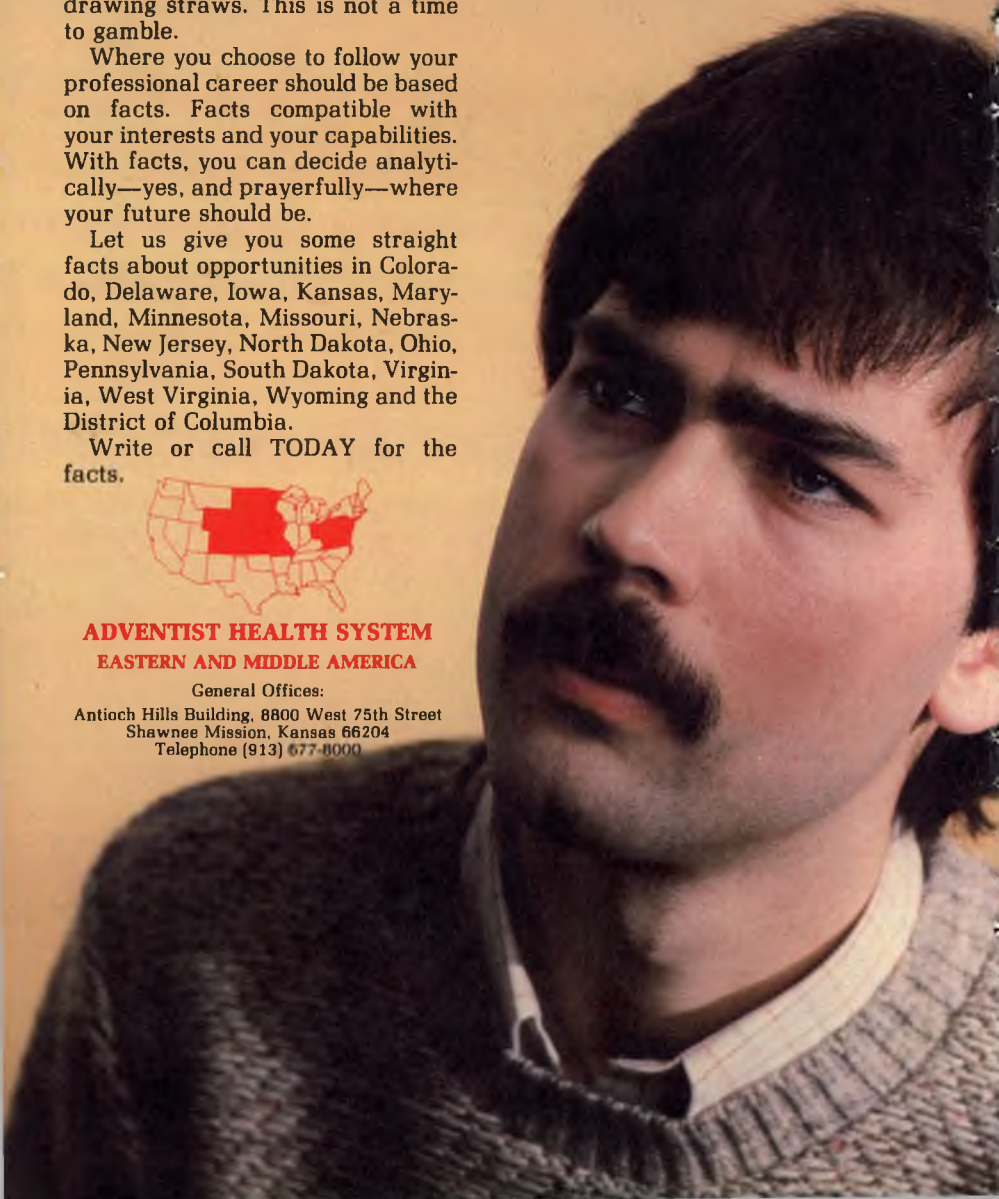
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(Numbers 23:23)



In September 1980, Sabbath School members around the world gave a liberal \$345,000 toward the building of a college for Papua New Guinea. Construction soon began, and considerable progress has been made.

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Four houses to accommodate farm and construction workers were built, and the first group of three homes for faculty are progressing. The sites for married-student cottages and staff homes have been prepared. The two dormitory blocks, each to house forty students, and the library block are nearing completion.

The construction of food services facilities and some of the instructional areas will begin soon.

All key positions and almost all senior academic staff posts have been filled with deferred appointments. By early 1984 the first stage of the building and development should be complete and, under the blessing of God, classes will commence.

The Australasian Division sincerely thanks Sabbath School members around the world for the generous support they have given to this and other projects. In 1978 a similar offering assisted in providing a library and administration building for the expanding Sonoma College on the Island of New Britain in Papua New Guinea. Students undertook much of the construction of that building, thus saving on labor costs. These new facilities mean much to the students and staff alike.

Another project that received assistance in 1978 was the purchase of a new twin-engine Piper Aztec aircraft through the Adventist Aviation Center at Andrews University. This plane transports mission personnel on trips that require long-distance flying over water.

Once again, thank you from the Australasian Division. Please continue to support the work of God around the world with your prayers and offerings. This Thirteenth Sabbath the new boarding school in Tahiti will benefit from the Special Projects portion (25 percent) of the offering.

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Editorial Office:

Union College
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Place orders with Pacific Press
Publishing Assoc., P.O. Box 7000,
Mtn. View, California 94039

Staff

Collegiate Publications Director:

Larry D. McGill

Editorial Director: Douglas Morgan

Editor: Douglas R. Stuva

Associate Editor:

Thomas K. Seibold

Business Manager: Steve Silva

Copy Assistants:

Jackie Ordelheide

Linda Wreed

Printing: Pacific Press

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The *Collegiate Quarterly* is written by faculty, students, and friends of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in North America. Organized under the Union College Board of Trustees, it is coordinated by Campus Ministry and published with the approval of the North American Division Church Ministries Committee.

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Editors: Ray Tetz, Casey Bahr, Jim Ponder, Norman Versteeg, Ed Wright

Contributors:

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Editor: Jana Ford-Harder

Contributors:

John T. Baldwin
Jana Ford-Harder

LaVonne Neff
David Slee



KETTERING COLLEGE OF MEDICAL ARTS

3737 Southern Boulevard Kettering, Ohio 45429 513 296-7201

Kettering College of Medical Arts was responsible for obtaining articles for lesson thirteen.

Chaplain: Robert G. Wilson

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Contributors:

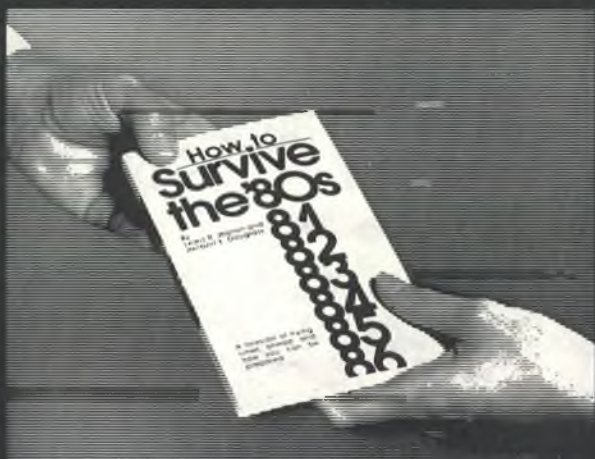
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1. The *Collegiate Quarterly* is designed to be just a supplementary quarterly. It is *the* Sabbath School quarterly for the college and university person—though many other environments and age-brackets are also attracted to its use. Use it as you would any other daily study guide or Sabbath School quarterly.
2. Along with each daily discussion, a reference is given of a biblical passage for further Bible study. We encourage you to read these passages—even though some may be lengthy—since this will greatly enhance your study.
3. Do not accept every concept and emphasis made in the *Collegiate Quarterly* just because it is in the *Collegiate Quarterly*. It can be dangerous to accept anything as truth, without personal investigation, simply because it has an organizational stamp of approval.

One goal of the *Collegiate Quarterly* is to aid in developing “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.” To meet this goal, it is necessary to include within the pages of this quarterly challenging and stimulating material—which inherently may contain something with which you disagree. Challenge the authors. Think. Prayerfully and critically question the material in each day’s lesson to determine the truth in the material for you.

Facts About the Collegiate Quarterly

- Published with the approval of the North American Division Church Ministries Committee.
- Special attention is directed toward the expressions and needs of the college and university person.
- An intercollegiate project of the colleges and universities across North America.
- The international circulation of the *Collegiate Quarterly* for the fourth quarter of 1982 is nearly 20,000.

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KETTERING MEDICAL CENTER

An Introduction to the Quarter

Where's the Love?

I still remember walking home from church as a teenager one humid, sticky afternoon in August. As I cut across a supermarket parking lot, I decided in disgust to quit attending.

Searching for someone who cared about others and showed interest in people, I had looked in vain to the religious leaders of my neighborhood. Hypocrisy, money-making, bigotry, insensitivity—these were all I seemed to find.

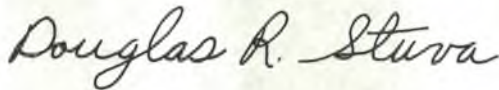
The songwriters of the day seemed to care more about people than did the sermon writers. "No Love at All," for instance, recorded by B. J. Thomas, used the examples of a hungry child on a street begging to eat, a troubled young girl standing on a bridge at the end of her world, and a poor old man standing at a corner with no place to go, to convince others that love is needed in man's dealings with man.

Authors I was reading in school also seemed to possess an intimacy with and a tenderness toward people lacked by the religionists I knew. John Steinbeck in *Of Mice and Men*, to be sure, portrays the tender feelings of concern and love that can develop between two men while also portraying the injustice and hurt other men are capable of inflicting. And Mark Twain's *Huck Finn* condemns one man owning other men, stirring the reader's emotions in favor of the oppressed and the hurt. These works showed a compassionate interest in people, moving me to do the same, while religion seemed to show an interest in itself, moving me to frustration.

Forsaking organized religion, I developed my sense of ethics from other sources. One day, though, I decided, having bypassed what man had gotten Christianity into, to go to the source of the religion itself. I don't remember if I started with Matthew or John, but I know I started. I read the four Gospels over and over again, studying the personality of Jesus.

I found a man gentle enough to urge His followers to be merciful and love their enemies. I found a man radical enough to take a stand for turning the other cheek in a military-minded society, yet fiery and righteous enough to burst in upon the crowd, form a whip and run the money-mongers out of the temple. I found a man filled with wit and wisdom, always sincere and never hypocritical. I found a man interested in people.

Seven years later, I continue to be fascinated with Jesus' personality. I still read, think, and wonder about Him. Sometimes I even write about Him and the reader will find in the following pages others also writing about Him, for Jesus is what the *Collegiate Quarterly* is about this quarter.



Douglas R. Stuva, Editor
Collegiate Quarterly

Sacrifice of Love



“... This is what the Lord says—he who created you,
O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘fear not, for I have
redeemed you’ ” (Isaiah 43:1, NIV).

Lesson 1, December 26-January 1

An Island Never Cries

INTRODUCTION

While riding down a pot-hole riddled alley with my family in our turquoise '57 Chevy, I heard Simon and Garfunkel's immortal "I am a Rock," for the first time. Lines from the song come back to me now:

I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain. . . . If I never loved I never would have cried. . . . I am a rock, I am an island. And a rock feels no pain, and an island never cries.

Just before reaching our relatives' home, I asked no one in particular, the way a child will, how a man could be a rock or an island, much less both at the same time.

Love—caring about someone or something—has often been portrayed as a risk. Love is said to be a razor that cuts, or a river that drowns.

Care about people—thereby giving them the power to hurt you—and they will surely use it. A child, for instance, natively loves and trusts his parents, only to be devastated by them when they divorce each other, says this scenario. If the child never would have loved, he never would have cried.

A teenager dates someone three or four times, and, just when feelings are beginning to develop, the drop slip comes over the phone or through a friend. A man develops a friendly, efficient working relationship with his fellow office workers, only to learn as time goes on that politics, favoritism and deceit control the "system" and he begins wishing he would have gone in business

for himself. A rock feels no pain, and an island never cries.

A frequent reaction to hurt, to being burned by caring for someone, is, of course, to force oneself to become hard emotionally—to build walls around one's feelings—to shove the emotions to the back of a closet until they're needed at some later time.

This defense mechanism is used as a means of mental survival by children of divorced parents, dumped teenagers and frustrated adults; by kids on the street, men and women in prison, and the elderly forgotten in rest homes.

Perhaps the largest risk one can take is marriage, and second, having children. What other relationships bond the participants together as these? What other relationships, then, offer a larger risk of being hurt by someone one cares about?

Yet, ironically, or perhaps not so ironically, each of these relationships is used as a comparison of God's relationship to mankind. First, the church is titled the bride of Christ, and, second, Jesus illustrated God's love toward humanity in the character of the father in the parable of the prodigal son.

Love can be a razor that cuts or a river that drowns. Love can cause pain. In God's case, it definitely has.

Yet, He, of course, did not wall up His emotions. He did not become a rock or an island.

Instead, He made us anyway.

D. R. S.

God "Unto Us"

by Calvin Thomsen

LOGOS

I remember well my first encounters with the God of traditional, systematic theology. In texts, heavily laden with Latin phrases, the attributes of God were spelled out. God, according to certain theologians, is the unmoved mover. He sits serenely enthroned in eternity. He is unchangeable, unaffected by any reality outside Himself. He is completely untouched by any emotion in all His interactions with His creatures.

**"God's
unchanging
majesty is
not expressed
in remote
transcendence but
in dynamic,
risky involvement."**

Such theological tomes were usually generously garnished with Bible texts (or fragments thereof). But I always had the suspicion that this picture of God was painted from the palette of Greek philosophical categories rather than Scripture. The god of Greek philosophy represented, at least in part, a reaction against the lustful, petty and quarrelsome gods of popular Greek mythology.

Yes, the Scriptures do paint a majestic picture of God. But the writers of Scripture are remarkably unconcerned about the essential nature of God apart from His dynamic interaction with His creatures. The very texts used to buttress the traditional, static concept of God often assume a radically richer meaning when considered as a whole. God is "the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity," but He is also "with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15, RSV). God does declare that "I the Lord do not change;" but He continues, "therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6, RSV). God's unchanging majesty is not expressed in remote transcendence but in dynamic, risky involvement with the ones He loves.

In creation God risked. He did not play it safe. Lucifer was proud because of his beauty (Ez. 28:17). Eve, after considering the forbidden fruit, chose to partake of that which was promised to make one wise (Gen. 3:6). God gave His creatures the freedom to rebel. But He also gave them intelligence and impressive capabilities. It would have been much safer to create beings both docile and dull; beings most unlikely to consider rebellion.

The history of God's continued involvement with His creatures reveals His eternal, sacrificial love. God chose to manifest His omnipotence not in despotic power but in unlimited resourcefulness in His response to the predicament of man. The depths of God's attachment to us is revealed in this verse: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15; RSV).

God must fully laid His own heart bare in the gift of His Son. This was the great sacrifice, the act in which God made Himself most vulnerable. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, who could have remained insulated in the far reaches of eternity, chose to orient Himself "unto us" in the person of His Son. It is this supreme gift that makes it possible for us to respond unto Him.

Freedom— The Great Risk

selected by Joe Martinson

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 12:31, 32

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.¹

Our first parents, though created innocent and holy, were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. God made them free moral agents, capable of appreciating the wisdom and benevolence of His character and the justice of His requirements, and with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience.²

God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automation. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan in dealing with the inhabitants of other worlds. It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.³

So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was not one note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies. But a change came over this happy state. There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures.⁴

Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Every departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach his ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God,—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death,—it is said that "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." "In all their affliction He was afflicted: . . . and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Judges 10:16; Isaiah 63:9).⁵

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

5. *Education*, p. 263.

6. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1074.

Joe Martinson is President of Martinsound Recording Studios in Alhambra, Calif.

December 28
Tuesday

A Man Comes to Men

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
selected by Euel H. Atchley

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Genesis 1:27

When the world began, God created Adam in his own image, as the climax of his creation. He wanted to have the joy of beholding in Adam the reflection of Himself. "And behold, it was very good." God saw Himself in Adam. Here, right from the beginning, is the mysterious paradox of man. He is a creature, and yet he destined to be like his Creator. Created man is destined to bear the image of uncreated God. Adam is "as God." His destiny is to bear this mystery in gratitude and obedience towards his Maker. But the false serpent persuaded Adam that he must still do something to become like God: he must achieve that likeness by deciding and acting for himself. Through this choice Adam rejected the grace of God, choosing his own action. He wanted instead to unravel the mystery of his being for himself, to make himself what God had already made him. That was the Fall of man. . . .

"The change of form which could not take place in man, now takes place in God."

But God does not neglect his lost creature. He plans to re-create His image in man, to recover His first delight in His handiwork. He is seeking in it his own image so that he may love it. But there is only one way to achieve this purpose and that is for God, out of sheer mercy, to assume the image and form of fallen man. . . .

Since fallen man cannot rediscover and assimilate the form of God, the only way is for God to take the form of man and come to him. The Son of God who dwelt in the form of God the Father, lays aside that form, and comes to man in the form of a slave (Phil. 2:5 ff). The change of form, which could not take place in man, now takes place in God. The divine image which had existed from eternity with God, assumes the image of fallen, sinful man. God sends his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:2 f).

God sends His Son—here lies the only remedy. It is not enough to give man a new philosophy or a better religion. A Man comes to men. Every man bears an image. His body and his life become visible. A man is not a bare word, a thought or a will. He is above all and always a man, a form, an image, a brother. And thus he does not create around him just a new way of thought, will and action, but he gives us the new image, the new form. Now in Jesus Christ this is just what happened. The image of God has entered our midst, in the form of our fallen life, in the likeness of sinful flesh. In the teaching and acts of Christ, in his life and death, the image of God is revealed. In Him the divine image has been re-created on earth. The Incarnation, the words and acts of Jesus, His death on the cross, are all indispensable parts of that image. But it is not the same image as Adam bore in the primal glory of paradise. Rather, it is the image of one who enters a world of sin and death, who takes upon himself all the sorrows of humanity, who meekly bears God's wrath and judgement against sinners, and obeys his will with unswerving devotion in suffering and death, the Man born to poverty, the friend of publicans and sinners, the Man of sorrows, rejected of man and forsaken of God. Here is God made man, here is man in the new image of God.

1. Excerpted from
Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
The Cost of Discipleship
(New York: Macmillan
Publishing Co., Inc.,
1963), pp. 337-340.

The Great Choice

Human freedom is an awesome reality. It's awesome because in making us free, God imposed definite limitations on His own power. That's part of His eternal sacrifice on our behalf. The Almighty Sovereign of the universe does not decide my destiny, I do. I, a feeble, defective, mistake-prone mortal. In the words of Jack Provonsha, God "hazarded His omnipotence on the gaming tables of man's freedom . . ."¹

How, then, should we handle this awesome gift of freedom granted us by the Divine gamble?

1. **Accept It.** In John Steinbeck's classic *East of Eden*, the Chinese servant Lee puzzles over God's words to Cain, "if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door . . . and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen 4:7). It seemed to be a promise that Cain, the murderer, would conquer sin. Lee checked the American Standard Bible, which renders the passage "Do thou rule over him." Still not satisfied he spent two years studying Hebrew with a rabbi. He concluded that the Hebrew word involved, *timshel* should be translated *thou mayest*. Thus the phrase really means "thou mayest rule over sin."

The significance of the passage, says Lee, is that "there are many millions in their sects and churches who feel the order, "Do thou," and throw their weight into obedience. And there are millions more who feel predestination in "Thou shalt." Nothing they may do can interfere with what will be. But "Thou mayest"! Why, that makes a man great, that gives him stature with the gods, for in his weakness and filth and his murder of his brother he has still the great choice."²

Lee's Hebrew scholarship may be suspect. None of the modern versions I checked translate the passage the way he did. Yet, he was right about what it means to be human. Those who use their freedom to deny that they have it must be very disappointing to the God who has ventured to give them "the great choice."

2. Enhance It.

We can use our freedom to choose slavery. This is the way of self-indulgence, which locks us into a life of hatred, discord, and selfish ambition (see Gal. 5:19, 20; c.f. John 8:34).

Freedom-enhancing choices, on the other hand are those oriented towards the Spirit of God. This is the way of service, which opens our lives to love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22) and keeps us truly free, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17, NIV).

3. **Share It.** Jesus told us that we ought to treat each other like God treats us (Luke 6:32-36). If God risks hurt, rejection and broken relationships to give us freedom, we should likewise risk freedom on those we love. In other words, coercion or manipulation are never conducive to mature, Christian interpersonal relationships. If you make love contingent on whether or not the other meets your expectations or fulfills your desires, you are not allowing the other the same freedom God allows us. Love has to risk freedom.

It's a gamble, for God and us, to give others "the great choice," but it's a safe bet to pay off in the truly loving relationships that give meaning to life now and through eternity.

D. F. M.

HOW TO
Key text:
Deuteronomy
30:19, 20

1. Jack W. Provonsha, *God Is With Us* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), p. 7.

2. John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (Penguin Books edition, 1979), p. 349.

□ **December 30**
Thursday

Tree for a Fallen World

by Jim Ponder

OPINION

Key text:

Revelation 22:17

Once upon a time a magnificent God and His loving Son lived in a perfect universe with billions of beautiful angels. They dwelt together in realms of light, art and music. Waterfalls skipped and danced around God's throne and butterflies flitted about the galaxies.

But Father and Son were lonely. They knew that way out in space was a dark little blob that could be made into something nice. They imagined it as a world of sunshine and warmth, of tawny hillsides speckled with daisies and strawberries. They saw man and woman strolling through forests and glades, valleys and gardens in perfect innocence. They even saw where a waterfall parts the redwoods to plunge 50 feet over the cliff at Big Sur to the pounding surf below.

But trouble was brewing, and God was faced with a question. Would He veto His new world to stave off the plots on one rebel spirit? Or would He let ugliness and death veto beauty and life?

With full knowledge of all possible consequences, God made the choice. "He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast."

Six millenia later we dwell on that tiny sphere. Treason and greed make it a messy place to exist. Death is the only conclusion we draw. Disease and famine, war and murder are the news of the day. Wastes strangle the seas; smog chokes the air. Sometimes we wonder if it's worth all this.

And yet, even now when the water we drink reeks of chemicals, we still sometimes catch the taste of a stream that danced in Eden. Or is it the lingering flavor of a stream that flowed one afternoon from the side of a Man hanging on a tree outside Jerusalem?

A bit more than a thousand years from now we walk along a river. It ripples past tufts of grass along a bank of raspberry blossoms. It begins in the heart of the King's Secret Chambers and flows out the gates to a green, mossy hill on the outskirts of the City.

Funny, we muse, how a stream can climb a hill like that. We gaze for a moment, then catch the breeze to the top of the knoll.

There, to our surprise, the stream loops down to water a couple of trees, not ordinary trees. The small one is sheltered by the enormous branches of the other.

What a Tree it is! Angels sing from its fruit-laden boughs. From one side of its massive trunk flows the clearest water in all eternity. We cup our hands to slake our thirst in the sweetest drink we have tasted. We climb the branches to take in the view.

We scramble from the Tree thrilling with a joy and beauty that seem in us as much as around us. We stoop to read an inscription the Gardener had placed beside the Tree. "Calvary," it says. "The Tree for a Fallen World."

Suddenly an answer comes to mind, an answer we questioned for millenia.

Yes, Lord God, you're right. *It is worth it all.*"

The stream skips a beat, then gurgles over cobbles on down to the valley. Off in the distance a Lion and a Lamb chase butterflies together over the little green hills.

"Even now when the water we drink reeks of chemicals, we still sometimes catch the taste of a stream that danced in Eden."

1. This weeks Introduction states that "Surely, if hurt comes to us through people we love, hasn't hurt come to God, through people He loves—us?" Do you agree? Why or why not? Is it possible for a perfect being to feel hurt? Is feeling hurt a weakness? Or, in this case, might it be a strength?
2. If God truly allows humans freedom of choice, then is He not something less than all-powerful? (See Logos for a possible answer.) Jack Provonsha comments that God "hazarded His omnipotence on the gaming tables of man's freedom that one day He might receive it back as man's gift of unremitting loyalty." Do you agree? Does the thought of a vulnerable God of limited power increase or decrease your appreciation of Him? Why?
3. Why do you think God chose to create creatures with freedom of choice, knowing the potential for the vast suffering and horror that comes with such freedom?
4. What do you think Bonhoeffer (Evidence) means in saying that Adam wanted to "unravel the mystery of his being for himself, to make himself what God had already made him." Do you agree that this was the basis of the fall of man? (Keep the full context of the statement in mind.) Why or why not?
5. Our freedom is revealed in the fact that we can choose whether or not to enter a saving relationship with God. But once we have made that choice, are there ways in which God still grants us freedom? Does freedom play a part in Christian growth? Explain.
6. Suggest ways in which God's risk in allowing us freedom might be reflected in our interpersonal relationships. What risks might be involved adopting such an attitude toward a child, parent, employee, spouse, or special friend? What might be the rewards?

Sacrifice Foreshadowed



**“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases’ ”
(Matthew 8:17, NIV).**

Lesson 2, January 2-8

Noah for the New Year

by Ray Tetz

He was getting too old to be out collecting wood. His steps were slower and more painful now. Ever since the flood there seemed to be more moisture in the air and he felt it in his bones. He probably would not have been out there at all except that it was a good excuse to get away from his squabbling family.

Who could have thought that eight people could raise such a ruckus? Who could have imagined that the very family God Himself had saved in the ark could now be saying all those un-goldy things to each other?

Life was more difficult now. Ten years earlier he could not have dreamed of the problems he now faced. But the problems were there. They were real. And he knew he had to face them. Gathering up the last stick he thought he could balance he turned his attention back to his family and home. He walked slowly, trying to think of something he might say to them, something that would cool things down and straighten things out.

Then suddenly the memories washed over him: the driving storm, the frightened sounds of the animals, the room rocking furiously as the Ark was thrown around like a stick. He remembered the darkness, and the terrified faces of his family lit only by flashes of lightening. He felt the wet wool against his skin

and the damp wood beneath his feet. He heard the cries of his family, and remembered them clinging to each other and thinking they might not survive. He recalled the desperate prayers, and how with terror they pleaded to be saved. He remembered thinking they would all die.

But somehow they survived. The Ark held together. The animals made it through. Somehow they were saved.

And in that moment he knew what his family needed—the knowledge of salvation; the memory of storms they had conquered and trials they had survived; the memory of thinking they were going to die, yet living. The fear that it would rain forever, subdued by a knowledge of the coming calm.

On the sea they had faced problems, troubles and fears they could not dream up in nightmares. And in this new land—so different from the one they had left, so much more difficult to control with so many problems to solve—wouldn't God save them here too, if only from themselves?

Getting a better grip on his bundle of sticks, Noah turned his own broken stick of a life over to God again, and prayed that salvation would be found for his family.

Not knowing just what would happen, Noah hummed softly as he walked on home.

INTRODUCTION

Ray Tetz is an associate pastor at Eagle Rock Adventist Church in Los Angeles, and an associate youth director for the Southern California Conference.

☐ January 2
Sunday

Unfailing Love

LOGOS

The God of the Old Testament can seem rather intimidating at times—like when He sentenced a man to death for picking up sticks on Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36) or when He ordered entire nations destroyed including “women, children and infants” (1 Sam. 15:3).

However, any apparent intimations of divine vindictiveness or peevishness are lost sight of when one looks at the full picture of God given by the OT. That picture clearly reveals His attitude of lovingkindness towards humanity, and foreshadows the ultimate revelation of His love in Christ. Even God’s most devastating OT judgment, the flood, was accompanied by a provision for salvation: “Come . . . into the ark” (Gen. 7:1).

The greatest clarity in the OT’s foreshadowing of the work of Christ, however, is found in the “Servant Songs” of Isaiah. Here are some of the attributes of the “Servant of the Lord” which declare the good news of God’s loving intentions toward His people.

1) Rectifier. The Servant comes to make wrongs right, to bring justice. At least initially, He accomplishes this mission in an unexpected way—without violence or destruction. “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. . . . He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth” (Isa. 42:2, 3, NIV).

2) Enlightener. “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa. 49:6, NIV). The light from God’s servant is cast in every direction, to all peoples. Despair, ignorance and meaninglessness are dispelled for all who do not shut themselves away from the light.

3) Sufferer. The Servant is “a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. . . . He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:3, 4, NIV). The OT God neither arbitrarily inflicts human suffering nor remains coldly aloof from it. In His Servant, God Himself participates in the deepest anguish humanity can know. And, He not only suffers *with us*, He suffers *for us*. His vicarious suffering is at the heart of God’s redemptive plan. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa. 53:5, NIV).

4) Liberator. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isa. 61:1, RSV). To those oppressed by economic or racial injustice, to those enslaved by never-fulfilled desires, to those shackled by anxiety and depression, the Servant brings liberation.

5) Lover. This attribute is not directly ascribed to the Servant, but one of the OT’s most powerful ways of expressing the relationship between God and His people was to describe God as a faithful lover and Israel as a sometimes promiscuous, sometimes apparently forsaken, but always beloved woman. “The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young only to be rejected. . . . ‘Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed,’ says the Lord who has compassion on you” (Isa. 54:6, 10, NIV).

D. F. M.

Love Communicated by Death

by Casey Bahr

The gospel of good news was first given to Adam in the declaration made to him that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; and it was handed down through successive generations to Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The knowledge of God's law, and the plan of salvation were imparted to Adam and Eve by Christ Himself. They carefully treasured the important lesson, and transmitted it by word of mouth, to their children and children's children. Thus the knowledge of God's law was preserved.¹

Christ as manifested to the patriarchs, as symbolized in the sacrificial service, as portrayed in the law, and as revealed by the prophets, is the riches of the Old Testament.²

All who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being educated constantly in regard to the intervention of Christ in behalf of the human race. This service was designed to create in every heart a love for the law of God, which is the law of His Kingdom. The sacrificial offering was to be an object lesson of the love of God revealed in Christ—in the suffering, dying victim, who took upon Himself the sin of which man was guilty, the innocent being made sin for us.³

As in that typical service the priest looked by faith to the mercy-seat which he could not see, so the people of God are now to direct their prayers to Christ. . . . who is pleading in their behalf in the sanctuary above. The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God.⁴

The shew-bread was kept ever before the Lord as a perpetual offering. . . . It was an acknowledgment of man's dependence upon God for both temporal and spiritual food, and that it is received only through the mediation of Christ.⁵

As Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner's behalf.⁶

Christ's work for the redemption of men and the purification of the universe from sin, will be closed by the removal of sin from the heavenly sanctuary and the placing of these sins upon Satan, who will bear the final penalty. So in the typical service, the yearly round of ministration closed with the purification of the sanctuary, and the confessing of the sins on the head of the scape-goat. Thus . . . the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ's death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing event of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.⁷

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Genesis 3:15

"The incense . . . represents the merits and intercession of Christ . . . which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God."

1. *Selected Messages*, Book One, p. 230.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 126.

3. *Selected Messages*, Book One, p. 233.

4. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 353.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

Casey Bahr is the Youth Pastor at Glendale Seventh-day Adventist Church.

☐ January 4
Tuesday

Good News in the Old Testament

by Rudy Torres

EVIDENCE

Key text:

Deuteronomy
9:6, 7

The gospel is not confined to the New Testament. The Old Testament also reveals God as a redeemer and liberator.

Of course many Christians do not know this, so they treat the Old Testament like a second-class citizen. For these the Bible is not their bible. Rather, they have a bible within the Bible.

To a certain extent, most of us probably do this. Recently, I examined my Bible carefully and discovered it was mostly worn in the book of Genesis and the Psalms and the entire New Testament.

Unfortunately, the Christian church has struggled long over its attitude toward the Old Testament. John Bright describes this plight of the church as follows: "This controversy regarding the Old Testament, begun in the church's infancy, has never been resolved, but has continued. . . . In theological circles today few subjects are being more warmly and voluminously debated. . . . than those that relate to the Old Testament, its place in the canon, its theological relationship to the New, and the principles that ought to govern its interpretation in the church."¹

Even Christians who see no formal distinction between the Old and New Testaments and recognize both to be the Word of God are sometimes bewildered by material in the Old Testament. As a result most Christians read the New Testament more than the Old.

Clearly, the church needs to hear a fresh voice.

I heard one when I took a class alongside a Jewish rabbi on, of all subjects, "Great Themes in the New Testament." The professor, a well-known New Testament scholar, was lecturing on the gospel in the New Testament and unconsciously cast aspersions on the Old Testament by saying it was a more primitive interpretation of religion tending toward legalism. At this the rabbi interrupted, "Professor, I don't believe you know the Old Testament very well. There is just as much grace there as in the New Testament." Then he began to cite passages from the Old Testament that moved the class to the marrow of our bones. He saved his most moving portion for last when he eloquently quoted Deuteronomy 9:6, 7 (NEB): "Know then that it is not because of any merit of yours that the Lord your God is giving you this rich land to occupy; indeed, you are a stubborn people. Remember and never forget, how you angered the Lord your God in the wilderness: from the day when you left Egypt until you came to this place you have defied the Lord."

He went on to say, "We Jews are not saved by works. We are saved because of God's mercy. We don't deserve it. We are saved because of Who God is, not because of who we are." If there is a Christian who understands the gospel any better than that, I have not met him. When the rabbi finished his remarks there was not a dry eye in the house. The gospel had spoken to each of us from the Old Testament.

**"We Jews
are not
saved by
works. . . .
We are
saved
because of
Who God is,
not because
of who
we are."**

1. John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 16.

Peeling the Dragon

HOW TO

Key text:
Ezekiel 36:26, 27

C. S. Lewis, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, introduces us to Eustace, an obnoxious little stinker that nobody likes. I have always loved this story—I am a Eustace. Eustace had, through plain greed and willfulness, turned into a dragon. But now, repentant and remorseful, he wants to be a boy again. Aslan, the magnificent lion, leads him to a beautiful clear pool and tells him to undress so that he may bathe. Aware that as a dragon he has no clothes, Eustace realizes that he must shed his ugly scaly skin, and frantically he tries to peel off layer after layer. But underneath each hideous layer is yet another layer. Finally the lion tells Eustace that he, Aslan, must do the job. Eustace says, "The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. He peeled the beastly stuff right off—just as I thought I'd done myself the other times. And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been."¹

This week we are considering the gospel as presented in the Old Testament. The practical question is, "What must I do about Christ's sacrifice for me as demonstrated both in the Old and New Testament?"

Morris Venden, in *Salvation By Faith and Your Will*, suggests that there are two, and only two, things that we can do.

1. **The first is to accept that magnificent sacrifice and to give ourselves completely—the entire hideous dragon—to Him.** Lewis comments that "I must be ploughed up and resown." "Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit."²

It sounds so easy. Yet it is so hard. Human beings do not give up their cherished ugly scaly skin so easily. Like Eustace, we insist on doing it ourselves. After all, we're intelligent beings, aren't we? We can control our lives. God gave us this intelligence, didn't He? We will just straighten out this mess on our own. So many giants of the Old Testament made the same mistake. Abraham, Moses, Jacob, David, Solomon—all tried to work out God's plan for them in their own way. They simply could not let God do it. But it is that complete letting go, that total surrender of all those wicked ways, as well as those we think are wonderful, that He asks of us.

2. **The second thing we can do, indeed, must do is to place ourselves in a position daily and continuously where God can take charge of our lives.** God never takes control against our will, so we must ask Him to do it. A conscious decision is necessary on our part. With prayer and daily Bible study we create this opportunity for God to enter and to change us.

Enoch is a fine example in the Old Testament of this daily walk with God. There are few Christians who would not be earnest and devoted if they knew they had but a short time to live. But Enoch's relationship with God lasted 300 years!

Yes, we can see this basic, essential step to salvation—surrendering to God's will that He might make us new—in the story of Eustace and Aslan. The process may hurt us the same as a tearing away of skin might, but it will also make us as smooth and soft as a peeled switch.

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), pp. 88-90.

2. C. S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977).

Beyond a Shadow (and a Doubt)

by Catherine Lang

OPINION

Key text:
Hosea 1:2, 3;
2:14-23; 3:1-5

How did the Old Testament believers do it? How did they maintain a spiritual experience? What picture of God sustained their faith?

They did not have the picture of God Incarnate—of Christ as a Healer of diseases, a Teacher of doctrine, and a passionate Man loved by women who wept at the tomb of a friend. And they did not have the picture of God's ultimate sacrifice laid out in simplicity for them—the death of His Son on a cross.

The Israelites knew God as a giant pillar of fire and a cloud above their camp. They knew Him as the Judge who sentenced Achan to death for breaking the law, as the force who killed Uzzah for touching the Ark, as the Shekinah Glory hidden in a gleaming aura in the sanctuary. But how did they know God in a personal way?

Elijah, accustomed to hearing God as the earthquake, wind, and fire, almost missed Him in the still small voice.

Christ's admonition to "Love your neighbor as yourself" may have seemed like new and bold teaching, but it had been given to Israel centuries earlier (Lev. 19).

Did they know that the person who gave the law with thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai would weep over Israel on Mount Olivet before His crucifixion? Did they know that the God who touched Jacob and made him lame would someday touch the lame and make them whole? Did they know that the destroyer of the firstborn of Egypt would Himself become the Firstborn of a redeemed race?

Nowhere in the Old Testament does the situation become more poignant than in the story of Hosea and Gomer. What kind of God allows such anguish and pain to invade the life of the prophet for the sole purpose of saying, "That's how I feel?" Is this "misery loves company" on the ultimate scale—or the attempts of a complex God to reveal Himself fully?

"In the face of overwhelming evidence we picture God in shadowy, indefinite terms."

Even Philip, Christ's own disciple, didn't feel comfortable with the Father. He begged, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us" (John 14:8, NIV).

Said Jesus in reply, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (vs. 9). How patient Christ is even with the unbelief of the disciples.

And suddenly we realize He is equally patient with us. For we have seen the Christ, we have heard the Gospel, we have known Jesus—and yet we miss Him, we fail to hear Him; we sense a God but not the unconditional loving Savior. In the face of overwhelming evidence, we picture God in shadowy, indefinite terms. We fear Him more than we love Him; we don't really know Him.

We are happily fortunate that even now, in our unbelief and inabilities, He is adapting His call to our ability to hear Him.

REACT
Lesson 2

1. How can the gospel revealed in the Old Testament be harmonized with disturbing acts by God in the Old Testament, i.e., the utter destruction of countless people in battles and meting out the death penalty for crimes that seem minor today? Are these acts of God anomalies, or do they somehow fit into the total picture of the gospel?
2. Is it proper to have an element of fear in our relationship with God, or does the gospel remove all fears?
3. Ellen White writes (Testimony) that "all who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being educated constantly in regard to the intervention of Christ in behalf of the human race." How effective do you think the sacrificial system truly was in educating the Hebrews concerning the sacrifice of Christ? If it was effective, why were most looking for a political reigning Messiah instead of a sacrificial Messiah?
4. Read Hosea 1:2, 3; 2:5-23; and 3:1-5. What was God hoping to reveal about Himself in asking Hosea to take the promiscuous Gomer as his wife? What about Hosea's personal emotions in the matter—was God simply using him to make a point?
5. The How To article refers to each of the following Old Testament figures as having "tried to work out God's plan for them in their own way." Concentrate on one incident from the lives of each which reveals their failure to trust God. How did God relate to them when they tried to do things their own way?
Abraham David
Jacob Solomon
Moses

Jesus the Man



"... Though he was in the form of God . . . he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6, 7, RSV).

Lesson 3, January 9-15

Jesus the Revolutionary

by H. S. Vigeveno

INTRO- DUCTION

I am about to shatter a dream . . . a dream which has grown up through the centuries . . . a dream portrait of Jesus that many hands have touched. The original portrait is in the gospels, but many have tried to improve the original and thereby have spoiled it. . . .

Take the commercial art, the almost obnoxious, sentimentally-sweet commercial art, from which we get our impressions of Jesus. He looks like a religious weakling. A soft, somewhat emaciated, ethereal, even effeminate creature seems to ask for our pity, rather than demand our devotion. His complexion is pasty. His cheeks are faintly tinted. His mouth is prettily rouged. His curly, golden hair flows girlishly over His shoulders. And His long, flowing robes place Him in the long ago and far away. He does not smile. He does not speak. He does not demand. He does nothing! . . .

Clean the canvass. Get back to the original. Not this religious weakling of our imagination. Not this affected emotionalist of our pretty pictures. But the Christ commanding in His manner, challenging in His message, conquering in His manhood, compelling in His mission—the revolutionary Christ! It may hurt to shatter the dream, but shatter it we must to see the true Master. . . .

Surely this was no weak affected religionist who walked the shores of Galilee and called to rough fisherman, "Follow Me." His very manner carried authority and purpose. They

left their nets to follow this commander of men.

Or, how can you escape the revolutionary manner with which He handled Himself in His hometown? He had started His preaching tour of Galilee and returned to Nazareth. His fame preceded Him, and when He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath Day they asked Him to say a few words. He took the scroll of Isaiah and read:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

He returned the scroll and said: "This very day this Scripture has been fulfilled . . . I expect you will be saying this proverb to me, 'Cure yourself, doctor!' Let us see you do in your country all that we have heard that you did in Capernaum. I assure you that no prophet is ever welcomed in his own country" (Luke 4:20-26 Phillips).

They were beside themselves. What right had He to accuse them? Who was He, the carpenter . . . Joseph's son? They rose up as one man, an angry mob. They took Him from the synagogue, through the village, out the road that led to the cliff, to the very edge. They were about to rush Him, throw Him over. He stood there piercing them with His eyes, then walked toward them. They parted as the Red Sea for the children of Israel, and He walked through the midst of the whole lynch-minded mob. Revolutionary is His manner!

1. Excerpted from H. S. Vigeveno, *Jesus the Revolutionary* (Glendale: G/L Publications, 1966), pp. 3-6.

H. S. Vigeveno is a well-known pastor, author, and radio speaker.

January 9
Sunday

Two Princes

LOGOS

When Prince Charles and Princess Diana announced the birth of their son, William Arthur Philip Louis, on June 21, 1982, the announcement elated all England. Coupled with a dubious victory in the Falkland Islands crisis, the birth caused celebration throughout the country. CBC radio broadcasts, reaching into the northern U. S., carried live interviews from streetcorners and pubs of London, getting the happy reaction of the citizenry. British gamblers called their bookies, placing bets on likely names for the nine pounds of new royalty. Even in the U. S., where networks carried the story in high priority on their news broadcasts, Americans purchased punch-out cardboard paper dolls of the royal baby and strained their vision for a glance at the new family on their color TVs.

When the Son of God was born, there was little celebration, or even notice of the event, among men. A few shepherds and several scholars from the East came to visit, but no Cable News Network showed up to instantly publicize the event worldwide. Instead of the thousands of parcels and cards today's royal newborn received, Jesus was given three gifts at the time of His birth. There were many who questioned His legitimacy. He was taken home, not to an extravagant palace, but more likely to an average small-town dwelling. It seems an unlikely entry for the Son of God.

"Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:5-7, RSV). The love which motivated the transition of God's son will always be difficult to understand—C. S. Lewis likened it to a human willfully becoming a worm or a crab. Yet we know the incarnation was not merely a passing glimpse of God—as when Moses saw God briefly behind the protection of His hand (Ex. 34:18-23). It was an occurrence which made vivid the character of God in a way man could clearly sense and not be overwhelmed by: **"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3, RSV, emphasis supplied).**

His modest birth made Him the societal equal of the masses around Him, and throughout His life He appealed to the common man. Yet He did not go through life completely unnoticed. At His birth the reigning king wanted Him killed (Matthew 2:3), and He sometimes gained the recognition of noted leaders. Always comfortable around them, He answered their probing questions and returned to the community He dedicated His life to, healing and teaching the people He had been born among. **"He purifies people from their sins, and both he and those who are made pure all have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers" (Hebrews 2:11, TEV).**

T. K. S.

Jesus: God's Word Made Flesh

by Grant Mitchell

Ellen White saw history in terms of a continuing conflict between Satan and God for the minds of all God's accountable creatures, especially humanity. Satan, for his part, has sought to undercut God by misrepresenting His character, His kingdom and His law of love.¹ God, on the other hand, has set out from the beginning to show mankind the truth about Himself.

God initially revealed Himself to individual men who told others of the revelations. These messages, of course, came to constitute the Old Testament. They told men what God was like, what He expected of them, what they could expect of Him, and how they could enter into a saving relationship with Him. Yet this method of revelation seemed at first glance to have been unsuccessful; due to Satan's continued accusations, the "earth was dark through misapprehension of God."²

How could Satan meet with such apparent success against the Ruler of the Universe? He had God at a distinct disadvantage. God's nature was difficult for the mind of fallen man to grasp. God seemed so distant, so abstract, so far beyond the ability of our language to describe or ourselves to know that it was not difficult for Satan to distort God by gross oversimplification, deception and coercion. God, on the other hand, was bound by His own perfect ethical constraints. He wanted His beings to serve Him as a result of their own intelligent, voluntary and loving choices.³ He would make it as easy as He could for man to know and understand Him, but not at the expense of distorting Himself or of deceiving or coercing man. The only way for God to overcome Satan would be for Him to reveal Himself so completely and honestly and yet so clearly that His character could never be misunderstood.

Thus God's "Word became flesh and lived for a while among us" (John 1:14, NIV). It is important to remember that Christ's coming was planned even before Satan's rebellion.⁴ It did not come about because the revelation of God through the Bible writers had in fact been defective; the Old Testament revelation was necessary to prepare people for, and to lead them to Christ when He did come (Gal.2:24). And by His coming and living with us, God has overcome Satan's advantage. "What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God. God sent His Son into the world, His divinity clothed with humanity, that man might bear the image of the invisible God. He made known in His words, His character, His power and majesty, the nature and attributes of God. Divinity flashed through humanity in softening, subduing light. He was the embodiment of the law of God, which is the transcript of His character."⁵

Now, some two thousand years later, we are still met daily by Satan with his accusations about God. How do we respond to these charges. Must we concoct some theoretical argument about a Being whose nature is beyond the limits of our finite minds to grasp? Hardly. We can merely look to the personality of Jesus, the Word made flesh. How simple God in His wisdom has made it for us.

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 1:14

"What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father."

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 21, 22.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

5. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, p. 1131.

Grant Mitchell is an attorney in Sanger, California.

☐ January 11
Tuesday

The Experience

by Paul E. Little,

selected by Michael T. Watt

EVIDENCE

Key text:

John 1:4

In Jesus we find the perfect personality. Ramm points out, "If God were a man, we would expect His personality to be true humanity. Only God could tell us what a true man should be like. Certainly there are anticipations of the perfect man in the piety of the Old Testament. Foremost must be a complete God-consciousness, coupled with a complete dedication and consecration of life to God. Then, ranked below this, are the other virtues, graces, and attributes that characterize perfect humanity. Intelligence must not stifle piety, and prayer must not be a substitute for work, and zeal must not be irrational fanaticism, and reserve must not become stolidity. In Christ we have the perfect blend of personality traits, because as God Incarnate He is perfect humanity." Schaff describes our Lord, with reference to this point of our discussion, as follows: 'His zeal never degenerated into passion, nor His constancy into obstinacy, nor His benevolence into weakness, nor His tenderness into sentimentality. His unwordliness was free from indifference and unsociability or undue familiarity; His selfdenial from moroseness; His temperance from austerity. He combined child-like innocence with manly strength, absorbing devotion to God with untiring interest in the welfare of man, tender love to the sinner with uncompromising severity against sin, commanding dignity with winning humility, fearless courage with wise caution, unyielding firmness with sweet gentleness!'"

Christ moved history as only God could do. Schaff very graphically says, "This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on matters human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."

1. Excerpted from Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe*, pp. 21, 22. © 1988 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of the USA and used by permission of Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60615

So what does it mean to me that Jesus lived as a man for 33 years? A man that got hungry, tired, thirsty? A man of intense feeling? A man who knew temptation? Does all of that really affect my life today? What difference does it make?

In the broadest context Jesus' life means:

1. **He provides atonement.** Since man chose sin, with its penalty, only a man could pay that penalty and thus change the alternatives. The man Jesus provided that "at-one-ment"—restored harmony between man and God. "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17, NIV).

Death to life. Forgiveness. Peace. Assurance.

But more specifically:

2. **I better understand God.** To face Satan's accusations about God and His character, to bridge the distance resulting from sin, to heal misunderstandings likely in that relationship, God chose to give the watching world, and me, a living example of what He was really like. Jesus went beyond telling to show me what His Father was like. For the truth about God, Jesus could say, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, NIV).

How could I love or serve some impersonal, cosmic force? But now I see God Himself through the life and person of His Son.

3. **He better understands me!** How, you ask, can the Creator not know His creation? Is there anything beyond His understanding? No.

But "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:18, NIV). And again, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15, NIV).

Because I am convinced that He has felt my pain, I will more easily turn to Him for encouragement or forgiveness, confident that He will care, He will sympathize, He will understand.

4. **He provides a pattern.** As a man subject to pressure, bound by time, plagued at times by fatigue, I carefully watch Jesus' life for His responses. And I see unqualified love (John 15:12), unhurried purpose (John 12:27), constant dependance (John 5:19), and responsive obedience (John 14:31). What a contrast to my days of self-centeredness, independence, and defensiveness. Nice ideas then take on new meaning as I see that they can, in fact find application in my life, today!

HOW TO
Key text:
John 17:3

Christ's Father

by Tom King

OPINION

Key text:
John 14:8, 9

"This is not a God at an ominous, transcendent distance, but close in incomprehensible goodness."

For Jesus, the outstanding image of God was that of Father, a Father who has an intimate interest in the welfare of His creatures. He did not attempt to justify God on philosophical or theological grounds, but, as Hans Küng puts it, to provide "a practical answer to the question of theodicy, about life's riddles, suffering, injustice, death in the world. This is not a God at an ominous, transcendent distance, but close in incomprehensible goodness; he is a God who does not make empty promises about the hereafter or minimize the present darkness, futility and meaninglessness. Instead, in darkness, futility and meaninglessness, he invites us to the venture of hope. In regard to him, man does not have to protect his freedom. God's rule and man's activity are not mutually exclusive."¹

It is, then, a powerful image when Jesus represents God as father of the "prodigal son," indeed, as father of the lost.

It is the father in Christ's parable who lets his son go freely, neither chasing nor following him. It is the father who sees his son returning even before the son sees him.

This profound metaphor is what Jesus tried to communicate by His life on this earth. When He speaks of God, He makes clear what may have seemed vague in the Old Testament. In other words, He makes unambiguous what seemed ambiguous.

Küng also says, "His message of the irrevocable closeness of God and his kingdom of course does not imply any new revelations of his nature, any new concept of God. Jesus does not reflect at all on God's innermost nature; he is not interested in metaphysical speculations on God as he is himself. He speaks of God in parables, not speculations, not arguing, but telling a story. For him, God is the concrete partner of his believing trust and devout obedience."²

The God of Jesus, then, is not despotic. He is clearly good, never demonically evil; never indifferent in His love for man, for He is the God of love. He commits Himself unreservedly to men, to their needs and hopes. Because He values freedom, He does not demand but gives; He spares those who impugn His holy law and consequently Himself; He rejoices at the return of a single unrighteous person more than over 99 righteous. This friend of sinners is what Jesus came to show the world.

1. Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), p. 674.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 671.

REACT
Lesson 3

1. This week's Introduction suggests we should throw out the traditional views of Jesus, and get back to the original, the Jesus of the Gospels. Identify and discuss two or three common misconceptions about Christ. How do these misconceptions obscure the original picture?
2. How could Jesus, encumbered by humanity and its limited intellectual and physical abilities, fully show us the personality of an infinite God (see Evidence)?
3. The author of the Testimony article concludes by commenting, "How simple God in His wisdom has made it [knowing God by viewing the personality of Jesus] for us." Is it really that simple? What, if any, barriers do we still have to deal with in knowing God?
4. Does God assume any risks in communicating with man? Did the earthly life of Christ reduce any risks? Did it open any new ones?
5. Discuss the following pairs of attributes as they relate to Jesus. Which of each pair better describe Him? Do both describe Him in some instances? Neither?

meek—aggressive
gentle—passionate
accepting—judgmental
easy going—demanding
submissive—forceful
service-oriented—success-oriented

6. Complete this sentence in as many ways as you can think of: Because of Jesus's life on earth, God better understands my . . .

Dependent on Another



“By myself I can do nothing . . . for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me” (John 5:30, NIV).

Lesson 4, January 16-22

Is Dependency Weakness?

by Norman Versteeg

INTRODUCTION

I was moving to southern California! The land of unclean air, crowded living conditions and weak Christians was soon to be my home. People had counseled me about it. The place I vowed never even to visit I was about to adopt as my home. Would it be as bad as people warned? Would the atmosphere be so polluted that I would have difficulty knowing and doing God's will?

Jesus did not spend all of His time in places and with people who would motivate Him to remain close to His Father, The Pharisees asked, ". . . Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mark 2:16, NIV). Some people questioned whether any good thing could come out of His childhood town.

Did the environment around Jesus have no influence on Him? Did what others were thinking and doing have no effect on His closeness to His Father and knowledge of His will? How could He be with people and not become like them? How could He love and accept others "as is" and still inspire them to change and become unlike their peers?

Jesus loved deeply. He cared very much. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36, NIV). He felt with people. He was their friend. They were His friends. But He loved His Father a little more than anyone else. He looked to His Father for guidance, ". . . I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me" (John 5:30, NIV).

Maybe Jesus' relationship with His Father was similar to a mountain climber and his guide. What Jesus was asked to do and where He was asked to go was too much to ask. He had never been over such rough, unsafe terrain. He had never faced the storm He would encounter on this expedition to reach human beings. Yet, He felt the reward would be worth the risk!

Mt. Rainier was a real challenge, but I had to climb it before my move to southern California. To climb it was to achieve the goal of most climbers in the northwestern United States. A hired guide or someone who had been to the summit previously was required. Crevassed glaciers claimed lives each year. Sudden and fierce storms would often leave the unprepared or inexperienced climber bewildered and cold. Death from exposure is common in summer. Considerable strength was needed to reach the summit. Someone who knew the route was vital to a successful climb.

All nine in our group reached the summit of Mt. Rainier. I enjoyed the sense of achievement and the spectacular scenery. But someone else deserved the credit for my reaching the summit. Floyd had been there before. He knew the way. He also knew and cared about me. That's how it was with Jesus and God the Father almost two thousand years ago. That's the way it is with God's family today. We do have a destination—a goal. But the goal in mind will never be as important as the Guide with whom we walk.

Norman Versteeg is pastor of the Irvine, Calif., Seventh-day Adventist Church.

January 16
Sunday

Divine Dependent

LOGOS

It is sometimes tempting to think of Jesus as something like Superman. If Lois Lane is in danger or the world is threatened with a Kryptonian invasion, Clark Kent, usually a bumbling, self-effacing newspaperman, proves in reality to be a god-like superhero who brings salvation through his spectacular feats. Jesus is sometimes viewed in the same way—effortlessly tapping the resources of His divine nature when the circumstances call for extraordinary action. But though Jesus was the God-Man, combining complete deity and complete humanity in a way that defies full explication, the Scriptures reveal that while on earth, He relinquished use of the divine power inherent within Him. So that He might fully identify with the human experience, Jesus lived a life of *dependency*, relying on power from the Father to meet the challenges He faced, just as we must.

After assuring us that Jesus fully shares our humanity (Heb. 2:14), the writer of Hebrews gives us this summary of Jesus' experience on earth: "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him . . ." (Heb. 5:7-9, NIV).

Jesus did not overcome life's difficulties by simply snapping His fingers for a quick zap of divine power. His intense prayer life shows that He sought the strength He needed from a source outside of Himself. Luke reports that there were occasions when "Jesus went out into the hills to pray, and spent the night praying to God" (Luke 6:12, NIV).

The Hebrews passage further informs us that Jesus became "perfect," or qualified, to be the source of our salvation, only through suffering, *learning* obedience, and submission to God. This implies that Jesus' dependence on the Father was part of a dynamic, growing relationship. "He was ever learning anew the meaning of conformity to the divine will as the experiences of life unfolded."¹ This learning could result only from an on-going day-by-day dependence on God.

Even the miracles of Jesus were accomplished through His dependence as a man on power from above. When accused of casting out demons through satanic aid, Jesus revealed the true source of His power by saying, "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28, NIV). Jesus carried out His mission of healing and liberation through the Spirit of God (see also Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus forcefully declared His dependence on the Father by saying, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19, NIV). As Leon Morris points out, this passage reveals both Jesus' dependence on the Father and the close relationship which such dependence involves: "It is not simply that He does not act in independence of the Father. He cannot act in independence of the Father. He can do only the things He sees the Father doing. There is continual contemplation of the Father by the Son, and uninterrupted communion."²

D. F. M.

1. William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), p. 65.
2. Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Vol. 4* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 312, 313.

The Vine

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 15:1; 11:41,
42

" 'I am the true Vine,' He says. Instead of choosing the graceful palm, the lofty cedar, or the strong oak, Jesus takes the vine with its clinging tendrils to represent Himself. The palm tree, the cedar, and the oak stand alone. They require no support. But the vine entwines about the trellis, and thus climbs heavenward. So Christ in His humanity was dependent upon divine power. 'I can of Mine own self do nothing,' He declared."

In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White comments on several specific instances where Jesus, the true vine, leaned on the Father for power. Here are some examples:

The Temptation

"Not without a struggle could Jesus listen in silence to the archdeceiver. . . . [But] Christ was not to exercise divine power for His own benefit. He had come to bear trial as we must do, leaving us an example of faith and submission. Neither here nor at any subsequent time in His earthly life did He work a miracle in His own behalf. . . . Strengthened with the memory of the voice from heaven, He rested in His Father's love."²

Struggles with Religious Leaders

"The priest and rabbis were taking the Son of God to task for the very work He had been sent into the world to do. By their sins they had separated themselves from God, and in their pride were moving independently of Him. They felt sufficient in themselves for all things, and realized no need of a higher wisdom to direct their acts. But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent on His power. So utterly was Christ emptied to self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will."³

Feeding of the 5,000

"The miracle of the loaves teaches a lesson of dependence upon God. When Christ fed the five thousand, the food was not nigh at hand. Apparently He had no means at His command; but He knew that after they had listened so long to His instruction, they would feel hungry and faint; for He was one with them in their need of food. They were far from home, and the night was close at hand. Many of them were without means to purchase food. He who for their sake had fasted forty days in the wilderness, would not suffer them to return fasting to their homes. The providence of God placed Jesus where He was; and He depended on His Heavenly Father for the means to relieve the necessity."⁴

Resurrection of Lazarus

"In all that He did, Christ was co-operating with His Father. Ever He had been careful to make it evident that He did not work independently; it was by faith and prayer He wrought His miracles. Christ desired all to know His relationship with His Father. 'Father,' He said, 'I thank thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' Here the disciples and the people were to be given the most convincing evidence in regard to the relationship existing between Christ and God."⁵

**"It was
by faith and
prayer that
He wrought
His miracles."**

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p.675.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 119, 120.
3. *Ibid*, p.208.
4. *Ibid*, p. 368.
5. *Ibid*, pp. 535, 536.

Striking the Deepest Chord

by Norman Versteeg

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 5:30

“Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the incarnation.”

J. I. Packer in his book, *Knowing God*, writes, “The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man—that the second person of the Godhead became the second man . . . He took humanity without loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly and fully divine as He was human. There are two mysteries for the price of one—the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus. It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie. ‘The word was made flesh’ (John 1:14). God became man: the divine has become a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wiggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this: The babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the incarnation.”¹

Have you often struck the deepest chord of all in the Christian life? I hear and feel the deepest chord in the stillness and privacy of my own mind. It happens when my mouth is closed. It happens when I’m not on a crowded freeway. It happens when my mind is not asking for the answers to a hundred questions. When I take time to remember who Jesus was, where He came from, how He lived, died and loved, then the greatest truth of all comes to me. “God, you do understand, because your Son was here too.” That is the deepest chord of all in the Christian life. It is the answer to most of the questions for which we most greatly long for answers. It is the medicine to begin the cure for the problem of sinfulness. It is the prescription that brings relief to the nagging thought that God doesn’t really care about our personal problems.

Jesus was like us in so many ways. He needed someone to hold, rock, feed, change, and talk to Him as a baby. As a boy, He needed someone to kiss away the pain and warm His heart with hugs and hopeful words. As a young man He struggled with the price of being so surrendered to His Father’s will that nothing else would matter as much. He wanted His friends to understand His feelings and give Him support when He desired to do the Father’s will but didn’t feel like it. He needed people to love Him. He needed the Father. In fact, Jesus wanted fellowship with man and His Father so intensely that He chose to die rather than lose either. Nothing else reveals so clearly His dependence on His Father. Nothing else reveals so powerfully the depth of His love for me.

He was like me. He was not immune from the feelings that try to pull me from God’s path. I’m glad He was and is like me. I would like to be more like Him. He spent enough time with the Father to keep a clear picture in His mind of the Father’s plan. Because of His closeness to the Father, He was able to love redemptively—to care, accept, understand and minister.

1. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1973), p. 46.

Relating to Jesus

How can we relate to someone we have never seen? How can we love someone we don't know? How can we know someone we can't hear or can't speak with face to face? I have found it easier to relate to Jesus by reviewing the kind of person He is revealed to be. Would I want Him as my friend? My conclusion is that if there were someone we knew with the qualities found in the life of Jesus, we would crave that person's friendship. Please list below ten qualities in a person which tend to draw you to him or her as a friend. If you struggle in listing ten, think of a favorite friend and list his or her qualities.

HOW TO
Key text:
John 11:35

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Here are some qualities that I would list in my friends:

1. They love me. "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3, NIV), God says. Jesus certainly has this quality.

2. They are permanent friends. Jesus will never leave or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).

3. They express how they feel about me. According to Isaiah 41:13, our God is one who holds us with His right hand.

4. My friends understand my feelings. John 11:35 says, "Jesus wept." Since He felt so deeply, He understands my feelings.

5. A true friend is available when I need him. No human friend can be available 100 percent of the time. God never slumbers or sleeps (Ps. 121:4).

6. A good friend must be one who is willing to forgive. Jesus forgives us all our sins (Col. 2:13).

7. A friend is concerned with our needs and meets as many as possible. Jesus is able to meet all our needs (Phil. 4:19).

8. A friend encourages us to change and grow. Jesus accepts us "as is" and we remain in His family as we grow. Growth is a result of acceptance, not the reason we receive acceptance (John 8:11).

9. A friend would risk his life to keep someone he loved from suffering. Jesus chose death over losing a close relationship with me (John 3:16).

10. A true friend brings so much joy and meaning to our lives that we want to know them forever. Jesus wants us to be with Him for ever. (John 14:1-3).

A true friend also has many other fine qualities. He lets us know when we need counsel that will help us avoid problems or pain.

I have discovered that Jesus is the only person with all the qualities of a friend who is always available. Keep thinking about the qualities that make Him the best friend. You will want to talk with Him more. He will become the last personal friend you would ever give up.

Keeping God Number One

by Norman Versteeg

OPINION

Key text:
Hebrews 4:15

How was Jesus able to keep His priorities in the correct order? What made Him able to respond to the devil with a strong and consistent "no"? Were His needs vastly different from ours or did He struggle as we do? Was closeness to God the thing that really provided the courage to choose the right path and strength to walk it?

The chapter titled "Gethsemane" in *The Desire of Ages* deals with the conflict Christ faced as He struggled with making a sacrifice beyond our imagination. A crisis tends to bring out what we really are. What we desire in the time of greatest pressure uncovers needs and concerns that may be hidden by the usual routine. Does Jesus really know how we feel in times of stress? Does His knowledge come from information about us or from His personal experience? The following statement is loaded with the humanity of Jesus. "The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. In the supreme agony of His soul He came to His disciples with a yearning desire to hear some words of comfort from those He had so often blessed and comforted, and shielded in sorrow and distress . . . He longed to know that they were praying for Him and for themselves. How dark seemed the malignity of sin! Terrible was the temptation to let the human race bear the consequences of its own guilt, while He stood innocent before God. If He could only know that His disciples understood and appreciated this, He would be strengthened."¹

The humanity of Jesus was pouring out. He longed for sympathy. He had a yearning desire to hear words of comfort. He longed to know His friends were praying for Him. He didn't feel like going to the cross. Had His disciples been awake enough to pray and alert enough to listen, their Lord and ours would have had a much easier struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane. They may not have been able to speak the right words, but listening would have helped. Being there and quietly waiting with Him would have given Him much courage and strength. We want the ability to give quick answers to every question and easy solutions to every problem. Too often for residents of planet earth there are no answers or solutions that are acceptable. At such times our unhurried presence, warm heart and open ears become God's answer and solution.

Have you been told you must stand alone as a Christian? Have you felt guilty that you needed Christian friends for support? Have you doubted that you would ever be able to stand through the last conflicts of earth and remain loyal to God? Jesus was able to demonstrate loyalty to the Father under impossible circumstances. He has a better plan for us. It is what He desired from His own friends. He called people to Him to become a body. Members of His spiritual family are joined together. We are to be united. We are to lean on each other. We are to give and receive support and understanding. Jesus needed love, understanding and support from humans. To need and minister to each other isn't to need God less. It's His way of distributing His love and power.

"Our unhurried presence, warm heart and open ears become God's answer."

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 687, 688.

REACT
Lesson 4

1. Do you agree with the Logos author's statement that Jesus "relinquished use of the divine power inherent within Him"? Is it really true that Jesus never "used" His divine power? What was the purpose of His being fully divine if He never exercised divine power? What does the writer of Hebrews mean in saying that Jesus "learned obedience" and was "made perfect" (5:19)? Since Jesus was fully divine, in what sense did he undergo a process to arrive at "obedience" and "perfection"? What implications might Jesus' participation in this process have for us?
 2. Ellen White comments (Testimony) that Christ made no long-range plans, but depended on the Father for guidance day-by-day. She urges that we should depend on God in the same way. Should such counsel lead us to forsake setting long-range goals, and developing strategies for the achievement of those goals? Discuss the proper relationship between divine leading and human initiative in terms of practical concerns such as: career planning, finding a marriage partner, planning for financial security, etc.
 3. In this week's Opinion, Norman Versteeg suggests that finding support from other members of the body of Christ is a form of dependence on God, and that it is not good for us to stand alone with God in our struggles. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Does dependence on fellow humans sometimes indicate a lack of trust in God?
 4. Versteeg also comments that sometimes there are "no answers or solutions that are acceptable" for the problems we face. He suggests that at such times God's answer is simply the caring presence of another. What is your reaction to this concept? Did Jesus always get "solutions" through dependence on the Father? May we expect answers for every situation through our dependence on God?
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Tempted in Every Way



“For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15, RSV).

Lesson 5, January 23-29

by Virginia Simmons

The Victor

INTRODUCTION

Just one! There has been just one person who ever lived up to what He taught—Jesus. What He preached, He practiced—flawlessly. And He lived a human life, remember? Though He was the Son of God He lived His life here a son of man. Hebrews 4:15 (RSV) says, “We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

How the enemy must have fought to provoke something in Jesus that would cause Him to sin. But consider Christ's power over temptation, not alone at the outset in the fierce wilderness struggle, but in His boyhood years, and through the succeeding years of intense conflict. He faced sibling rivalry and neighborhood scorn. He dealt with subtle scholars who picked at His words and dogged His steps. He was scorned, reviled, criticized and slandered. He was arrested, mocked and spit upon. His new friends deserted Him. He was struck with open hand and clenched fist, crowned with thorns and finally killed. His temptations were not confined to certain compartments, but covered the entire spectrum of human experiences.

Additionally, He was subjected to a not-so-human temptation that we can never experience. He could have exercised His divinity to overcome at any point in any situa-

tion. When spat upon, a single word could have reduced His heckler to nothingness. When taunted, a single motion could have left His taunter speechless. When struck, a single look could have paralyzed his attacker.

Had He used any power unavailable to us, however, He would have overcome life's struggles with power exceeding that of the human realm. By faith He took hold of the power of His Father. As with us, possessing faith in His Father was the only way He could legitimately live a sinless life.

In Gethsemane, for instance, He prayed from the depths of His soul. Three times He cast Himself upon the ground and cried to God for help and relief, submitting His will to God's. In contrast, our lives are often like that of one of my favorite little people. His daily disobedience and over-exuberance in the classroom was most wearing to his teacher. She patiently counseled and prayed with and for him until he finally pleaded, “Teacher, please stop praying for me, I don't want to be good.”

It was because Jesus used God's defenses that He was, as a man, able to withstand Satan's constant harassment. Just as He looked to His Father for strength to overcome temptation, for us victory comes, “not as a matter of exerting great will power, but as a matter of turning our eyes very slightly and looking at the Cross.”¹

1. Helmut Thielicke, *Christ and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 81.

Virginia Simmons is a professor of education at Union College.

□ January 23
Sunday

The Salvation Link

by Ken Downing

LOGOS

I was in traffic court for the first time, caught driving seven miles over the speed limit. My Bible teacher had been caught doing the same that night. I was ticketed, and he was warned. He was middle-aged and driving a Studebaker. I was young and driving a sports car—four barrel, four-speed, with dual chromed exhaust pipes that rumbled in a most satisfying way. The lesson was not lost on me, though, and I took my father to court with me. He was in his mid-fifties, gray haired, dressed in a conservative suit, looking like a very responsible father. "Is that your father with you?" the judge asked. It worked. I got six months probation with no fine. Without saying a word, Dad had effectively mediated my case.

There is a need on man's part to find a mediator when he has erred. In the O.T. that mediator was the high priest, one who could sympathize fully with man (as a sinner himself) but with God only in an incomplete sense (Heb. 5:1-3). Because he was sinful, the sacrifices the high priest offered were unable perfectly to reunite man with God and thus were an imperfect link, a "shadow" of things to come, a perpetual reminder that the relationship was still broken (Heb. 10:1-4).

The book of Hebrews is an attempt to prove first of all that Christ was the perfect sacrifice who has become a perfect high priest. He was the Son of God, God Himself (Heb. 1:1-3), a fulfillment of prophecy (Heb. 1:4ff), and a legitimate High Priest even though not a Levite (Heb. 7:1ff). The connection with God cannot be questioned; if He could relate to *man* the salvation link will be fully restored.

Hebrews then establishes that Christ can perfectly relate to man and convince him to accept His own sacrifice in place of man's sin and guilt.

The author categorically states that Christ was flesh-and-blood man, able to suffer, made like man in every respect so that He can identify with man (Heb. 2:14-18). He even declares that in His humanity He has been tempted "in every respect" like we are. But he clarifies that with a reminder that He was without sin and, by analogy, had a sinless nature (4:14, 15).

Of greatest importance is the recognition that a sinless life (and nature) was an absolute condition for paying the penalty of sin. Whatever "advantage" Christ had was essential to effect our salvation. And His temptations were very real. In the wilderness experience (Matt. 4:1-4) the temptation to use His divine power was complicated with the temptations of greed, lust, and gratification.

"Whatever 'advantage' Christ had was essential to effect our salvation."

But the greatest evidence of His ability to fully identify with sinful man as High Priest was the fact of His experiencing the absolute penalty for sin. Regardless of the temptation—greed, lust, hate, whatever—the ultimate pain and penalty of sin is separation from man and God. When Jesus cried out from the cross, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46), and even in Gethsemane when He pled to have the pain of separation removed (Matt. 26:39ff; see also Heb. 5:7), He experienced the eternal separation of the second death. That horror was an experience none of us have to experience, a horror which gives Jesus an empathy with man and his temptations in an ultimate sense.

Not Even One

The world is our field of missionary toil, and we are to go forth to labor surrounded with the atmosphere of Gethsemane and Calvary.¹

Could Satan have induced Christ to yield to a single temptation, could he have led Him by one act or even thought to stain His perfect purity, the prince of darkness would have triumphed over man's Surety, and would have gained the whole human family to himself. But while Satan could distress, he could not contaminate. He could cause agony, but not defilement. He made the life of Christ one long scene of conflict and trial; yet with every attack, he was losing his hold upon humanity.

In the wilderness of temptation, in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross, our Saviour measured weapons with the prince of darkness. His wounds became the trophies of His victory in behalf of the race.²

In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the Word of God. . . . So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage.³

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work.⁴

Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a "Thus saith the Lord" was a sign that could not be controverted.⁵

Angels came and ministered to our Lord in the wilderness of temptation. Heavenly angels were with Him during all the period in which He was exposed to the assaults of satanic agencies. These assaults were more severe than man has ever passed through. Everything was at stake in behalf of the human family. In this conflict Christ did not frame His words even. He depended upon "It is written" (Matt. 4:4). In this conflict the humanity of Christ was taxed as none of us will ever know. The Prince of life and the prince of darkness met in terrible conflict, but Satan was unable to gain the least advantage in word or in action. These were real temptations, no pretense. Christ "suffered being tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Angels of heaven were on the scene on that occasion, and kept the standard uplifted, that Satan should not exceed his bounds and overpower the human nature of Christ.

In the last temptation Satan presented to Christ the prospect of gaining the whole world with all its glory if He would only worship him who claimed to be sent of God. Christ must then issue His command. He must then exercise authority above all satanic agencies. Divinity flashed through humanity, and Satan was peremptorily repulsed. "Get thee hence, Satan," Christ said, "for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10).

It was enough. Satan could go no further.⁶

A familiarity with the Word of God is our only hope. Those who diligently search the Scriptures will not accept Satan's delusions as the truth of God.⁷

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Hebrews 2:14-18

"With every attack, Satan was losing his hold upon humanity."

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 12.
2. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 701.
3. *Selected Messages Book One*, p. 228.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 95.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

The Tempter's Tactics

by Karla Bartel

EVIDENCE

Key text:

Matthew 4:1-11

William Barclay gives insight into the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. "The tempter launched his attack against Jesus along three lines, and in every one of them there was a certain inevitability.

"(i) There was the temptation to turn the stones into bread. . . . It was a temptation to Jesus to use his powers selfishly and for his own use, and that is precisely what Jesus always refused to do. There is always the temptation to use selfishly whatever powers God has given us. . . .

"(ii) . . . The tempter renewed his attack from another angle. In a vision he took Jesus to the *pinnacle of the Temple*. . . . Why should not Jesus stand on that pinnacle, and leap down, and land unharmed in the valley beneath? Men would be startled into following a man who could do a thing like that. . . . There were two good reasons why Jesus should not adopt that course of action. First, he who seeks to attract men to him by providing them with sensations has adopted a way in which there is literally no future. . . . Second, that is not the way to use the power of God. . . . God expects a man to take risks in order to be true to Him, but He does not expect him to take risks to enhance his own prestige. . . .

"(iii) So the tempter tried his third avenue of attack. It was the world that Jesus came to save, and into his mind there came a picture of the world. The tempting voice said: 'Fall down and worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of this world.' . . . What the tempter was saying was, 'Compromise! Come to terms with me! . . . Wink just a little at evil and questionable things—and then people will follow you in their hordes.' . . . Back came Jesus' answer: 'You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve him and swear by his name. . . . He laid down the uncompromisingness of the Christian faith. Christianity cannot stoop to the level of the world; it must lift the world to its own level.

"There could be no compromise in the message he preached and the faith he demanded."

"So Jesus made his decision. He decided that he must never bribe men into following him; he decided that the way of sensations was not for him; he decided that there could be no compromise in the message he preached and in the faith he demanded. That choice inevitably meant the Cross—but the Cross just as inevitably meant the final victory."¹

Jesus expects no less from his followers. When Jesus calls us to a new life of peace and love, He also calls us to a life of obedience which springs from our love for Him. When we give homage to Jesus and call Him our "king" we are in effect saying that we are willing to obey the laws of His kingdom. However, so often in the life of the human, the willingness of the heart and the practicality of the life are two different things. Paul expressed it this way, "I do not understand what I do, For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do" (Rom. 7:15).

Christ was tempted as we are to disobey God's will. He dealt with this problem in the same way in which we are to deal with it. We can only meet Satan's temptations when we are depending on the power of God to meet them for us. In practical terms, this means "dying daily" by telling God every morning that we want to be His, and that we need divine strength in order to live for Him.

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 1. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975) pp. 66-70.

The Master's Methods

by Barbara Goyne

HOW TO

Key text:
Luke 6:12

Temptation is a chronic and worrisome problem, common to all. As with other problems, the real solution lies in Christ. He alone survived temptation and remained sinless. It pays to study success. What did His life teach us about victory in this constant conflict?

1. **Give high priority to the attack on sin in your life.** Jesus considered the war with Satan of major importance and gave prime time to dealing with it. Large slices of His time were set aside for dialogue with His Father and for discerning truth in Scripture (Luke 6:12).

2. **Understand your own helpless condition.** Christ was convinced of His helplessness in the struggle with Satan. He knew of no human means to resist temptation (John 15:5).

3. **Be absolutely sure of victory.** Jesus was equally convinced that His Father was able and 100 percent willing to intervene and accomplish the task of overcoming temptation for Him. He kept His attention ever on His Father, which meant that He could not think about Himself or parley with temptation. The Everlasting Arms had already bridged the gulf of sin (Prov. 18:10; Romans 8:37).

4. **Plan for time to be alone with God.** Jesus, who loved the masses, the dinner parties, the discussion groups, knew that He also needed solitude. Here, in vivid contrast, He could more clearly see the problem of temptation, and determine ahead of time what His mode of action should be when tempted. At this time He donned His armor of resistance (Eph. 6:13-17).

5. **Lean not on your own understanding, but on the Word of God.** Jesus depended on the Word to shape His vision of reality. "Sin," as defined by the human mind might be far from "sin" as defined by God. Jesus used the Scriptures not only for enlightenment, but as a powerful weapon against Satan (Ps. 17:4).

6. **Take care of your body.** From experience, Jesus well knew that Satan attacks men during periods of physical weakness. He kept His body strong and vigorous, for His whole Being was involved in the struggle.

7. **Go with confidence about your work.** When Jesus finished His period of communion with God, He went cheerfully on with His work, knowing that in His time God would bring relief. He was fully confident that He who keeps the sun in the sky would *that day* also keep Him from falling, and ultimately deliver Him triumphant (John 16:33; Jude 24).

Tempted As We Are

by LuAnn Venden

OPINION

Key text:
Mark 10:27

When Christ came to this earth He came with a definite purpose: first, to redeem us all, and second, to prove beyond a doubt that living without sinning, according to God's law, is possible. Jesus, in order to prove both these points had to be tempted as we are, yet still live victoriously.

Christ was tempted far beyond what we are tempted, because, perhaps, of the fact that Satan *knew* his race for victory would be won or lost based on his success in the battle with Christ.

The method by which Christ resisted the devil is an example for every Christian to follow—He spent hours in prayer and communion with His Father. One would be hard put to believe even an hour passed without some type of communication between Father and Son, whether it be conscious or subconscious. Jesus thought of His Father continually, as evidenced by His words, and talked with Him and meditated about Him often.

Christ could have manifested His own divine power at any time during His ministry, but if He had, all would have been lost for us. Satan immediately would have declared "unfair play." Since none of us have this temptation to reckon with, Jesus was, again, tempted beyond what we are.

Let's illustrate this. If I own a car but am not old enough to have a driver's license, the temptation to drive that car illegally is very real. If, however, I don't own a car or have a license, the temptation to drive without a license is really no temptation at all. I am, in the same way, not tempted to fight back to save myself from ridicule or seek revenge by using divine powers, whereas Jesus surely was.

Repeatedly in His ministry, Jesus spoke of dependence on His Father and the endless possibilities that can occur in one's life if one places his faith and trust in the Lord. Take, for instance, the happening recorded in Matthew 9:22 where the sick woman was made well by faith. And of course, there's "faith as a grain of mustard seed" (Matt. 17:20) that removes mountains.

And how does one get this faith? Through a continuing relationship with Jesus Christ, just as He had with His Father.

The Temptations of the Spirit

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

SUPPLEMENT
Lesson 5

Jesus repelled the second temptation of Satan with the words "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Satan had tempted Jesus to ask for a visible acknowledgement of his divine Sonship, not to let himself be satisfied with God's Word and promise, and to want more than faith. Jesus called such a demand tempting God, that is the putting to the proof of the faithfulness of God, the truth of God, the love of God, and attributing to God faithlessness, falsehood and lack of love, instead of looking for them in oneself. All temptation which aims directly at our faith in salvation brings us into the danger of tempting God.

The temptations of the spirit, therefore, with which the devil tempts Christians, have a double aim. The believer is to fall into the sin of spiritual pride (*securitas*) or perish in the sin of despair (*desperatio*). But in both sins there is the one sin of tempting God.

Securitas

The devil tempts us in the sin of spiritual pride, in that he deceives us about the seriousness of God's law and of God's wrath. He takes the word of God's grace in his hand and whispers to us, God is a God of grace, he will not take our sins so seriously. So he awakens in us the longing to sin against God's grace and to assign forgiveness to ourselves even before our sin. He makes us secure in grace. We are God's children, we have Christ and his cross, we are the true church, no evil can now befall us. God will no longer hold us responsible for our sin. What spells ruin for others has no longer any danger for us. Through grace we have a privileged position before God. Here wanton sin threatens grace (Jude 4). Here it says: "Where is the God of judgement?" (Mal. 2:17), and "we call the proud happy; yea they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they tempt God, and are delivered" (Mal. 3:15). From such talk follows all indolence of the spirit in prayer and in obedience, indifference to the Word of God, the deadening of conscience, the contempt of the good conscience, "shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). (Man persists in unforgiven sin and daily piles up guilt upon guilt.) Lastly there follows the complete hardening and obduracy of the heart in sin, in fearlessness and security before God, hypocritical piety (Act 5:3, 9). There is no longer any room for repentance, man can no longer obey. This way ends in idolatry. The God of grace has now become an idol which I serve. This is clearly the tempting of God which provokes the wrath of God. . . .

Desperatio

The temptation of *desperatio*, to despair (*acedia*) corresponds to the temptation to *securitas*. Here not the law and the wrath, but the grace and promise of God are attacked and put to the test. In this way Satan robs the believer of all joy in the Word of God, all experience of the good God; in place of which he fills the heart with the terrors of the past, of the present and of the future. Old long-forgotten guilt suddenly rears up its head before me, as if it had happened today. Opposition to the Word of God and unwillingness to obey assume huge proportions, and complete despair of my future before God overwhelms my heart. God was never with me, God is not with me, God will never forgive me; for my sin is so great that it cannot be

"The God of grace has now become an idol which I serve."

“In his own strength he will be a saint—in defiance of God—in self-annihilating ascetism.”

forgiven. Thus man's spirit is in rebellion against the Word of God. Man now demands an experience, proof of the grace of God. Otherwise, in his despair of God he will no longer listen to his Word. And this despair drives him either into the sin of blasphemy or into self-destruction, to the extremity of despair, to suicide, like Saul and Judas; or man, in despair of God's grace, will try to create for himself the sign that God refuses him; in his own strength he will be a saint—in defiance of God—in self-annihilating ascetism and works—or even by magic. . . .

When Satan deploys God's Word in the law against God's Word in Christ, when he becomes the accuser who allows man to find not comfort, then we ought to think of the following: First, it is the devil himself who here puts God's Word into the mouth. Second, we should never argue with the devil about our sins, but we should speak about our sins only with Jesus. Third, we should tell the devil that Jesus has called to himself not the righteous but sinners, and that we—in defiance of the devil—wish to remain sinners in order to be with Jesus rather than be righteous with the devil. Fourth, we should understand how, in such temptation, our own sin is punished by the wrath of God and comes to light; that is, first, our ingratitude in the face of everything that God has done for us up to this moment. “Forget not what good he has done for you.” “Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me, and to him. . . will I shew the salvation of God” (Ps. 50:23); second, our present disobedience which will do no penance for unforgiven sin and will not relinquish its favourite sin (For unforgiven, cherished sin is the best gateway by which the devil can invade our hearts); and, finally, our hopelessness, as though our sins were too great for God, as though Christ had suffered only for trivial sins and not for the real and great sins of the whole world, as though God did not still purpose great things even with me, as though he had not prepared an inheritance in heaven even for me. Fifth, I ought to thank God for his judgement on me, which shows me that he ‘heartens’ and loves me. Sixth, I must recognize in all this that I am here thrust by Satan into the highest temptation of Christ on the cross, as he cried: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” But where God's wrath broke out, there was reconciliation. Where I, smitten by God's wrath, lose everything, there I hear the words: “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Lastly, in gratitude for temptation overcome I know, at the same time, that no temptation is more terrible than to be without temptation.

Excerpted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), pp. 123-126.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of this century's leading Protestant theologians.

REACT
Lesson 5

1. After reading this week's lesson, do you feel Christ had any advantages over other men in resisting temptation? If so, what were His advantages? Did He have any disadvantages? What were they?
 2. Following Barclay's line of interpreting the temptations of Jesus (Evidence), identify modern temptations faced by individuals, the church, and nations that fall into the three categories of Jesus' temptations. Complete the following sentences:
 - a) We are tempted to selfish use of the power and resources God has given us by . . .
 - b) We are tempted to follow the way of sensations by . . .
 - c) We are tempted to compromise the gospel by . . .
 3. This week's Opinion author asserts that Jesus came to prove that it is possible for humans to live without sinning. Does this mean that it is possible for sinful human beings to reach the point where, through Christ's power, they have complete victory over conscious sin? Explain why or why not.
 4. Suggest some antidotes for the temptation to *securitas* which Bonhoeffer discusses in the supplementary article. Discuss the five suggestions for *desparatio* that he gives. Do you find them helpful? What do you think Bonhoeffer means when he says "no temptation is more terrible than to be without temptation"? Do you agree?
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Divinity Flashes Forth



“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, NIV).

Lesson 6, January 30-February 5

by Duane J. Fike

Divine Insight

INTRO- DUCTION

"This cake is just divine," she said, as she picked up its last crumbs with her fork. Perhaps she meant that the cake exceeded her expectations, or that it was out of this world. While her remark carried no theological connotations, this week we will try to zero in on exactly what divine does mean, and how Christ was truly divine.

Most dictionaries suggest that divine has two general meanings: having the nature of a deity—godlike; and being able to foretell through the art of divination—a soothsayer. Christ fits both definitions, and at the same time transcends such a limited scope. He was not just like a god, He was God. And He could not only foresee what would happen, He knew the hidden past within men's hearts. Many biblical prophets were able to see the future, but what prophet knew the secret sins, the guilt, the corrupt ideas, or the need for forgiveness the way Christ did while on earth. It was this power, this ability to read humans like the open pages of a book, that makes us still respect His divinity.

Why was Christ's divinity so

tied to the inward actions of man? Why did He not go for the more spectacular fortune-telling business? Maybe one reason Christ did not come off like a soothsayer was that He realized the limitations of being able to tell the future. How much does the future really affect us, other than our own death? A person who foresees that a war is about to break out might take precautions, and a glance at tomorrow's newspaper today might make one wealthier, but is such knowledge really related to eternal values? Of course, if we were able to foresee how our lives could turn out, we might live differently, but are we not more affected by what has happened than what will happen? (As a side thought, consider what dimension of divinity is required of Christ, who can still love after He has read the ugly hearts of His children.)

Christ's divinity, as shown in this week's lessons, was not revealed in only one way. Just like the lady's evaluation of the cake, Christ's divinity exceeded all expectations—or what is a God for?

Come, Follow Me

by Jim Brauer

LOGOS

That Jesus was human is usually not questioned by the sophisticated "thinkers" of today. But whether He is divine or not remains a stumbling block for many, (Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Moslems, etc.). Scripture is quite complete however, in expressing the conviction that Jesus was indeed more than just man, in fact, God.

Let us first examine what the prophets had to say about this divinity.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]" (Isa. 7:14, RSV).

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' " (Isa. 9:6, RSV, emphasis supplied).

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2, RSV). The prophets recognized that the Messiah was God.

Second, what did others say about Him? "He asked His disciples, 'Who do men say that the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'but who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the son of the living God' " (Matt. 16:14-16, RSV). On another occasion, the demon He came in contact with certainly knew who He was. "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him and cried with a loud voice, and said, 'What have I to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of the most high God, I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not' " (Mark 5:6, 7, RSV).

Last and by no means least, it is important to recognize what Jesus said about Himself:

"Philip saith unto him, 'Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, 'Shew us the Father?'" " (John 14:8, 9).

"Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, 'How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me, But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me . . . My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.' Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him" (John 10:24-27, 29, 30).

Here Jesus is saying that not everyone is going to want to recognize or admit that He is in fact both God and man. But Scripture is abundantly clear if you have eyes to see and ears to hear.

"And the high priest answered and said unto him, 'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Thou hast said' " (Matt. 26:63, 64).

God With Us

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Matthew 1:23

"He was the surpassing glory of heaven."

While God's Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding His pre-existence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed.

The world was made by Him, "and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right.¹

Christ had not ceased to be God when He became man. Though He had humbled Himself to humanity, the Godhead was still His own. Christ alone could represent the Father to humanity, and this representation the disciples had been privileged to behold for over three years.

"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake." Their faith might safely rest on the evidence given in Christ's works, works that no man, of himself, ever had done, or ever could do. Christ's work testified to His divinity. Through Him the Father had been revealed.²

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself. Now was proved the truth of His words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" John 10:17, 18; 2:19.

Over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, Christ had proclaimed in triumph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." These words could be spoken only by the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.³

Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of Glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men. . . . And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, "God with us."⁴

1. *Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 247, 248.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 663, 664.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 785.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Divinity Demonstrated

by Louis F. Were,
selected by Jack Dougan

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 10:25-39

Jesus not only declared plainly that He was God, but the whole of His ministry on earth cannot be explained on any other ground. By His words He showed that He knew all things; God and man; life and death; angels and devils; time and eternity. Concerning everything, He spoke as One having authority and possessing all knowledge. He never uttered one speculation, He never merely expressed an opinion, He never hesitated, He never had to alter or retract any words. By His works and His miracles He showed unhesitating mastery of sea and land, body and soul, life and death. He declared that His works proved His Divinity—see John 10:25, 32, 33, 36-39. As shown in these verses, the Jews sought to apprehend Him for blasphemy.¹

“Though they sought to slay Him because He claimed to be God, they could not do so because He was God.”

There can be no doubt that Christ's Omniscience is brought to view in the incident of the woman taken in sin and brought before Jesus by her accusers. When Jesus “stooped down, and wrote on the ground,” these hypocrites “went out one by one.” Jesus revealed to them that He knew their innermost thoughts. They were before their infinite Judge, with their secret sins laid bare before them by One Who knew all about them. They disappeared before the thunders of His wrath broke over them—see John 8:3-9.²

There are about fourteen references to attempts on the life of the Lord Jesus in John's Gospel alone; and yet He sat daily in the Temple teaching; but no man laid hands on Him—until He had completed His earthly ministry, and then He permitted them to kill Him. The only conclusion is that though they sought to slay Him because He claimed to be God, they could not do so because He was God.³

At His birth into this world the angels declared His divinity. He could feed multitudes from a few pieces of bread. The bread multiplied in His hands. He turned water into wine without the media of grapevines. He could have turned stone into bread, or otherwise Satan's temptation would have been meaningless. At His word, storms hushed their angry voices, and the heaving deep sank to rest at His behest. When He spoke the blind received their sight, the lame ran as the deer, the deaf heard, the grave gave up its dead.⁴

As is well known, the Gospel of John was written to prove that Jesus, by nature, is equal with His Father. The introductory words of this gospel declare: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God* . . .”

Commenting on verse 1, Dr. Albert Barnes says: “ ‘Was God.’ In the previous phrase John had said that the Word was *with* God. Lest it should be supposed that He was a different and inferior being he here states that He was God. There is no more unequivocal declaration in the Bible than this, and there could be no stronger proof that the sacred writer meant to affirm that the Son of God was *equal with the Father*.”

1. Louis F. Were, *The Woman and the Resurrected Beast* (1973), p. 20.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

□ February 2
Wednesday

Jack Dougan is Operations Manger at KUCV—FM
in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Case of the Missing Gardener

Since the divinity of Christ is so central to the plan of salvation, it's not difficult to find practical, personal meaning in this great truth. But the following parable by the philosophers Flew and Wisdom provides a backdrop for more fully appreciating the divinity of Christ.

Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend this plot." The other disagrees, "There is no gardener." So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener." So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give a cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Sceptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?"

The thrust of the parable is, of course, that there is no rational evidence for the existence of God. How can one claim existence for a being that no one has ever seen or touched, and who, far from keeping His "garden" in good shape, leaves it devastated by suffering?

Jesus' claims to divinity have a particular significance in the light of these difficult questions. John Warwick Montgomery comments that "central to the Christian position is the historically grounded assertion that *the Gardener entered the garden*: God actually appeared in the empirical world in Jesus Christ and fully manifested his deity . . ."

Thus, the conviction that Jesus Christ was God made flesh helps me to:

1) **Accept God's Reality.** God is not obscure, ethereal or absentee. In Jesus, He has thoroughly and tangibly immersed Himself in our world. When the skeptic asks, Show me your God, the primary answer is not a vague philosophical concept, but, Look at Jesus of Nazareth.

2) **Understand God's Favor.** If Jesus is God, then I can know that His attitude of compassion and self-giving love towards humanity is God's attitude. Because of Jesus we are assured that "ultimate reality is friendly to man."²

3) **Believe God's Promises.** Promises like forgiveness and eternal life are tremendous, but no one can produce empirical proof regarding the fulfillment of these promises. Yet, if we believe that the man Jesus who lived among us and spoke these bold promises was God, then we have a firm basis for holding to their validity.

D. F. M.

HOW TO

Key text:

Hebrews 1:1-3

1. Quoted in *Christianity for the Tough-Minded*, John Warwick Montgomery, ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc. 1973), p. 30.
2. Jack W. Provonsha, "The Ultimate Question," *College People*, March 1982, p. 21.

The Nature of Christ and the Great Controversy

by Bruce Bottsford

OPINION

Key text:
Genesis 3:15

How Christ was both human and divine has been a source of contention among Christians since the ascension. Groups of Christians have executed each other over differences about Christ's divinity.

The disadvantages to a human form are endless and beyond our imagination. Christ took a human body with all its limitations and physical discomforts because His presence on earth in human form was necessary for our salvation. Satan's accusation that God's law is unjust and impossible for created human beings to obey had to be answered.

If Christ came to this earth as a human to answer Satan's accusations, any use of Christ's divinity would cast doubt on His demonstration to the universe that man can obey God's law. Christ's temptation in the wilderness to change the stones to bread was also a temptation to use His divine power for His own benefit and comfort. Failing to persuade Christ to misuse His divine power, Satan next tempted Christ to misuse His dependence on the Father's power by casting Himself down from the temple.

In the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:41-44), Christ thanked the Father for hearing His request to raise Lazarus. When Christ cast out an evil spirit that the disciples had been unable to cast out (Mark 9:29), Christ made it plain that He was successful when the disciples failed, not because of His divinity, but because of His fasting and prayer. This indicates Christ's dependence was not on His own power but on His relationship with the Heavenly Father. However, Christ showed His divinity in exercising authority in forgiving sins (Matt. 9:2) and the casting out of the money changers from the temple (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 591). In this and other instances, Ellen White wrote, "divinity flashed through humanity."

After the victory was gained and Christ had died, He used His divine power to resurrect Himself after the Father called and gave permission. It was Christ's own divine power, as indicated by His prediction, "I will lay down My life that I might take it again" (John 10:17, RSV). When Christ came from the tomb, He said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25, RSV, see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 785).

This understanding of how Christ's divinity functioned during His time on earth is crucial to the great controversy theme, the backbone of Adventist theology. It is interesting to note that the Bible itself does not definitively discuss the great controversy concept. We are indebted largely to Ellen White for placing Bible truths into the broad context of the great controversy. We may wonder why God waited until the nineteenth century to reveal something so basic. But we can be thankful for the deepened significance which the great controversy motif gives to our understanding of Christ's nature. As a human, He vindicated God's law before the universe of intelligent beings. As God, He forgave sins and conquered death, thereby ensuring the demise of Satan's reign of terror.

REACT
Lesson 6

1. If a nonbeliever were to ask you why you believe that Jesus is divine, what reasons would you give? Try to identify at least three.
2. The Logos author states that the evidence for Jesus' divinity is abundantly clear "if you have eyes to see and ears to hear." Does this suggest that acceptance of Jesus' divinity is based on an inner responsiveness or conviction more than on empirical proof? How would you describe the relationship between faith and reason when it comes to forming beliefs about Christ?
3. Do you agree with Louis Were's (Evidence) argument that Jesus' miracles are evidence of His divinity? If, as stated in previous lessons this quarter, Jesus relied on the Father and utilized no power not available to other humans, why would His miracles be an evidence of His divinity?
4. Discuss the parable by Flew and Wisdom in the How To article. What do you think the point is? What would you change or add to the comments of the How To author in forming a Christian response to the parable?
5. Complete this sentence in as many ways as occur to you: "Because Jesus Christ was Immanuel (God with us), I . . ."

God, Man, or Mixture?



“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, RSV).

Lesson 7, February 6-12

by Leo the Great

A Theme For Joy

INTRO- DUCTION

From the Sermon on the Feast of the Nativity, I.

Therefore the Word of God, Himself God, the Son of God who "in the beginning was with God," through whom "all things were made" and "without" whom "nothing was made," with the purpose of delivering man from eternal death, became man: so bending Himself to take on Him our humility without decrease in His own majesty, that remaining what He was and assuming what He was not, He might unite the true form of a slave to that form in which He is equal to God the Father, and join both natures together by such a compact that the lower should not be swallowed up in its exaltation nor the higher impaired by its new associate. Without detriment therefore to the properties of either substance which then came together in one person, majesty took on humility, strength weakness, eternity mortality: and for the paying off of the debt belonging to our condition, inviolable nature was united with passible nature, and true God and true man were combined to form one Lord, so that, as suited the needs of our case, one and the same Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, could both die with the one and rise again with the other.

Rightly therefore did the birth of our Salvation impart no corruption to the Virgin's purity, because the bearing of the Truth was the keeping of honour. Such then beloved was the nativity which became the

Power of God and the Wisdom of God even Christ, whereby He might be one with us in manhood and surpass us in Godhead. For unless He were true God, He would not bring us a remedy, unless He were true Man, He would not give us an example. Therefore the exulting angel's song when the Lord was born is this, "Glory to God in the Highest," and their message, "peace on earth to men of good will." For they see that the heavenly Jerusalem is being built up out of all the nations of the world: and over that indescribable work of the Divine love how ought the humbleness of men to rejoice, when the joy of the lofty angels is so great?

From the Sermon on the Feast of the Nativity, III.

In order therefore that we might be called to eternal bliss from our original bond and from earthly errors, He came down Himself to us to Whom we could not ascend. . . . A Victim had to be offered for our atonement Who should be both a partner of our race and free from our contamination, so that this design of God whereby it pleased Him to take away the sin of the world in the Nativity and Passion of Jesus Christ, might reach to all generations: and that we should not be disturbed but rather strengthened by these mysteries, which vary with the character of the times, since the Faith, whereby we live, has at no time suffered variation.

Excerpted from *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, Vol. XII (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), pp. 129, 133.

Leo the Great was Bishop of Rome from 440-461 A.D.

☐ February 6
Sunday

The God-Man as John Saw Him

by Beatrice Neall

LOGOS The aged apostle John, reflecting upon the wondrous life of the God-man, describes Him in the simplest language of the gospel writers, but with perhaps the deepest layers of meaning. He sees Jesus as the one who redoes creation and undoes the effects of the fall.

The initial words of John's gospel—"In the beginning"—are meant to carry us back to Gen. 1:1, where we see God creating the world. John then transforms the powerful formula of creation—"And God said"—into the noun *Word* ("By the word of the Lord the heavens were made," Ps. 33:6), which he then personifies as the second Person of the Godhead. Jesus is the creative Word of God, the active agent in creation and re-creation. Envisioning the world upon the eve of the incarnation, the apostle sees that it has reverted to the darkness of its primeval state (John 1:5). Then suddenly the light again shines in the darkness: "the true light that enlightens every man" comes into the world (v. 9). The darkness tries to resist (see vv. 10, 11) but is forced to give way before the onslaught of light (v. 5).

As the Word once spoke into existence life in its teeming forms in an empty world (Gen. 1:20-26), He now brings life to a dying world (1:4)—Abundant life (10:10), eternal life (3:16)—now (5:24). "In him was life"—how the apostle dwells upon the concept! From Him pour all the elements that give life: water (4:14; 7:37, 38), light (1:4; 9:5), air (*pneuma*—wind or spirit, 3:5), bread (6:35).

As the apostle recalls the miracle of man's creation in the image of God, he states that the Word today has power to create sons of God—not through human procreation (which the ancients believed was caused by the union of maternal blood with paternal desire), but through the direct power of God as at the beginning (1:12, 13). But man, who had no part in his original creation, must consent—must believe—for the miracle of re-creation to take place (v. 12).

John then climaxes his recapitulation of creation by the amazing conclusion that the Word, having created man as flesh, Himself becomes flesh and dwells among men (1:14). At this point the Word takes on an added role—He not only creates, but He reveals the Father (vv. 14, 18) by expressing the mind of God to humanity. God incarnate in the Word becomes understandable to the world.

The Word-made-flesh undoes all the evils of the fall. As the Lamb of God, whose skins covered the shame of our first parents (Gen. 3:21), He takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). When He rises up out of the waters of chaos, the Spirit as a dove once more descends to brood upon the earth (Gen. 1:2, Heb.; John 1:32) and bring forth new life. Through Jesus, the Spirit in its fulness is attracted back to earth (1:33; 14:16; 20:22). Best of all, Jesus as God-man restores the communication between heaven and earth that had been severed by sin (Gen. 3:8, 22-24). By His humanity He reaches to the lowest depths of human depravity; by His divinity He exalts fallen man to the throne of God. He is Jacob's ladder upon which angels ascend and descend (1:51), bringing blessing to the race.

Doer, re-doer, un-doer—this is John's portrait of the God-man.

The Mystery of the Incarnation

Although Christ's divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. The human did not take place of the divine, nor the divine of the human. This is the mystery of godliness. The two expressions "human" and "divine" were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct individuality. Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own. His deity could not be lost while He stood faithful and true to his loyalty. Surrounded with sorrow, suffering, and moral pollution, despised and rejected by the people to whom had been entrusted the oracles of heaven, Jesus could yet speak of Himself as the Son of man in heaven. He was ready to take once more His divine glory when His work on earth was done.¹

Equal with the Father, honored and adored by the angels, in our behalf Christ humbled Himself, and came to this earth to live a life of lowliness and poverty—to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Yet the stamp of divinity was upon His humanity. He came as a divine Teacher, to uplift human beings, to increase their physical, mental, and spiritual efficiency.

There is no one who can explain the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. Yet we know that He came to this earth and lived as a man among men. The man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty, yet Christ and the Father are one."²

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. . . .

Never, in any way, leave the 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. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called "that holy thing." It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. 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 as one as ourselves; for it cannot be.³

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 14:30
Hebrews 4:15

"The stamp of divinity was upon His humanity."

1. *Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1899.
2. Letter 32, 1899.
3. Letter 8, 1895.

God Contracted to a Span

by J. I. Packer

EVIDENCE

Key text:

John 1:1-18

1. The baby born at Bethlehem was God.

Christian apologists sometimes talk as if the statement that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God were the final and complete answer to all questions about His identity. But this is hardly so, for the phrase itself raises questions, and can easily be misunderstood. Does the statement that Jesus is God's Son mean that there are really two gods? Is Christianity then polytheistic, as Jews and Mohammedans maintain? Or does the phrase 'Son of God' imply that Jesus, though in a class by Himself among created beings, was not personally divine in the same sense as the Father is? In the early church, the Arians held this, and in modern times Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians and others have taken the same line. Is it right? What does the Bible mean and when it calls Jesus the Son of God?

These questions have puzzled some, but the New Testament does not really leave us in doubt as to how they should be answered. In principle, they were all raised and solved together by the apostle John in the Prologue to his gospel. He was writing, it seems, for readers of both Jewish and Greek background. He wrote, as he tells us, in order that they 'might know that Jesus is . . . the Son of God; and . . . believing . . . might have life through his name' (John 20:31). It is as Son of God that he presents Jesus throughout the gospel. However, John knew that the phrase 'Son of God' was tainted with misleading associations in the minds of his readers. Jewish theology used it as a title for the expected (human) Messiah. Greek mythology told of many 'sons of gods', supermen born of a union between a god and a human woman. In neither of these cases did the phrase convey the thought of personal deity; in both, indeed, it excluded it. John wanted to make sure that when he wrote of Jesus as the Son of God he would not be understood (that is, misunderstood) in such senses as these, and to make it clear from the outset that the Sonship which Jesus claimed, and which Christians ascribed to Him, was precisely a matter of personal deity and nothing less. Hence this famous Prologue (John 1:1-18). The Church of England reads it annually as the gospel for Christmas Day, and rightly so. Nowhere in the New Testament is the nature and meaning of Jesus' divine Sonship so clearly explained as here.

"The Sonship which Jesus claimed was precisely a matter of personal deity and nothing less."

See how carefully and conclusively John expounds his theme.

He does not bring the term 'Son' into his opening sentences at all; instead, he speaks first of the Word. There was no danger of this being misunderstood; Old Testament readers would pick up the reference at once. God's Word in the Old Testament is His creative utterance, His power in action fulfilling His purpose. The Old Testament depicted God's utterance, the actual statement of His purpose, as having power in itself to effect the things purposed. Genesis 1 tells us how at creation 'God said, *Let there be . . . and there was . . .*' (Gen. 1:3). 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made . . . he spake, and it was done' (Ps. 33:6, 9). The Word of God is thus God at work.

John takes up this figure and proceeds to tell us seven things about the divine Word.

(i) 'In the beginning was the Word' (verse 1). Here is the Word's *eternity*. He had no beginning of His own; when other things began, He—was.

(ii) 'And the Word was *with God*' (verse 1). Here is the Word's *personality*. The power that fulfils God's purposes is the power of a distinct personal being, who stands in an eternal relation to God of active fellowship (this is what the phrase means).

(iii) 'And the Word was *God*' (verse 1). Here is the Word's *deity*. Though personally distinct from the Father, He is not a creature; He is divine in Himself, as the Father is. The mystery with which this verse confronts us is thus the mystery of personal distinctions within the unity of the Godhead.

(iv) 'All things were made by him' (verse 3). Here is the Word *creating*. He was the Father's agent in every act of making that the Father has ever performed. All that was made was made through Him. (Here, incidentally, is further proof that He, the maker, does not belong to the class of things made, any more than the Father does.)

(v) 'In him was *life*' (verse 4). Here is the Word *animating*. There is no physical life in the realm of created things save in and through Him. Here is the Bible answer to the problem of the origin and continuance of life, in all its forms: life is given and maintained by the Word. Created things do not have life in themselves, but life in the Word, the second person of the Godhead.

(vi) 'And the life was *the light of men*' (verse 4). Here is the Word *revealing*. In giving life, He gives light too; that is to say, every man receives intimations of God from the very fact of his being alive in God's world, and this, no less than the fact that he is alive, is due to the work of the Word.

(vii) 'And the Word *became flesh*' (verse 14). Here is the Word *incarnate*. The baby in the manger at Bethlehem was none other than the eternal Word of God.

And now, having shown us who and what the Word is—a divine Person, author of all things—John indicates an identification. The Word, he tells us, was revealed by the incarnation to be God's Son. 'We beheld his glory, the glory *as of the only begotten of the Father*' (verse 14). The identification is confirmed in verse 18, 'The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father . . .' Thus John establishes the point at which he was aiming throughout. He has now made it clear what is meant by calling Jesus the Son of God. The Son of God is the Word of God; we see what the Word is; well, that is what the Son is. Such is the Prologue's message.

When, therefore, the Bible proclaims Jesus as the Son of God, the statement is meant as an assertion of His distinct personal deity. The Christmas message rests on the staggering fact that the child in the manger was—*God*.

But this is only half the story.

"He was the Father's agent in every act of making that the Father has ever performed."

“He was not now God *minus* some elements of His deity, but God *plus* all that He had made His own by taking manhood.”

2. The baby born at Bethlehem was God made man.

The Word had become flesh: a real human baby. He had not ceased to be God; He was no less God then than before; but He had begun to be man. He was not now God *minus* some elements of His deity, but God *plus* all that He had made His own by taking manhood to Himself. He who made man was now learning what it felt like to be man. He who made the angel who became the devil was now in a state in which He could be tempted—could not, indeed, avoid being tempted—by the devil; and the perfection of His human life was only achieved by conflict with the devil. The Epistle to the Hebrews, looking up to Him in His ascended glory, draws great comfort from this fact. ‘In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, *he is able to help them that are tempted.*’ “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 2:17 f., 4:15 f.).

The mystery of the incarnation is unfathomable. We cannot explain it; we can only formulate it. Perhaps it has never been formulated better than in the words of the Athanasian Creed. ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; . . . perfect God, and perfect man: . . . who although he be God and man: yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the manhood into God.’ Our minds cannot get beyond this. What we see in the manger is, in Charles Wesley’s words,

*Our God contracted to a span;
Incomprehensibly made man.*

Incomprehensibly—we shall be wise to remember this, to shun speculation, and contentedly to adore.

A Mystery Devised by Love

by John Wagner

HOW TO
Key text:
1 Timothy 3:16

A recent special issue of the *Adventist Review* was devoted entirely to a brief discussion of the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs held by Seventh-day Adventists. Part four, titled "The Son," filled one page where it was declared: "Forever truly God, Christ became truly and fully human."¹ This week's study has focused on understanding that truth and, perhaps more importantly, on applying the truth to living in 1983.

How can one understand the implications and applications of this topic to collegiate life in the closing decades of the twentieth century?

1. **Remember that, to human minds, there is some degree of mystery in the Incarnation (see 1 Tim. 3:16).** While you may never be able to fully satisfy yourself with a paradigm for understanding, that lack does not negate a vital truth.

2. **Accept the witness of inspired writers, believing that God was in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19) who became flesh and lived among the human race (John 1:14).** Simply because a concept is beyond your ken does not give you liberty to discredit those who have been given truth and commissioned to proclaim that truth.

3. **Accept the Incarnation as a gift of love from your Creator.** Only love—incomprehensible love—could devise and implement such a plan.

4. **Believe that Christ's advantage does not disadvantage you.** "Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was."²

5. **Commit each day, each activity to God as Jesus did and invite His control in your life so that His victory can be yours.** Maintain that relationship by daily communion with Him in study and in prayer.

6. **Live as He directs through His word, through the impressions of His Spirit, and through the intelligent use of reasoning power He gave you.** The world will be more easily convinced of the "mystery of godliness" when they see a practical demonstration of that in your godly life.

1. *Adventist Review*,
(Vol. 158, No. 31), p. 6.
2. *The Desire of Ages*,
p. 664.

John Wagner is vice-president for academic affairs at Union College.

February 10
Thursday

How Human is Human?

OPINION

Key texts:
John 14:6
Hebrews 7:26, 27

In recent years, the human nature of Christ has been a hotly-debated topic within Adventism. One group argues that Christ took a human nature, corrupted and degraded by 4,000 years of sin. He was fully subjected to all the weaknesses of sinful humanity, though He never yielded to temptation. They point to Ellen White quotations like the following to support their position: "He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin."¹ Their emphasis is on Jesus as our example. Just as Jesus overcame sin with all human liabilities through dependence on the Father, so we can overcome through dependence on Christ.

A variation on this view is that Christ was born "born again." He thus had no advantage over the converted individual when it comes to temptation, but the Holy Spirit dwelled in Him from birth.

The other group views Christ as the second Adam—fully human but completely free from the inherent sinfulness that corrupts all fallen beings. Christ's nature was affected by sin—He experienced the physical infirmities caused by sin, but not infected by sin—He was completely pure on the inside. Statements like the following bolster their position: "Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ. . . . let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such as one as ourselves; for it cannot be."² Their emphasis is on Christ as our substitute—the atonement He provides through His perfect obedience and sacrificial death.

No attempt to address the debate as such is being made here. What I wish to point out is that each side of the debate emphasizes a concept about Christ's human nature that is crucial to the plan of Salvation. And both sides accept the truth of these two central concepts: Christ was fully human—the one true man (first group above) and Christ was completely sinless—the one perfect sacrifice (second group).

We should allow our humanness to be shaped by His humanness.

Jesus' declaration, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6, NIV) suggests that it is by looking to Him that we discover what it is to be authentically human. Christ is the truth—in His person we find the most accurate representation of reality. Christ is the life—eternal (John 3:16) and abundant (John 10:10). His life in the world is the ultimate definition of what human life is meant to be. Therefore, we should allow our humanness—our values, priorities, our entire lifestyle—to be shaped by His full, authentic humanness revealed in the gospel.

The desperateness of our condition, however, demands something greater than an example for salvation. The greatness of Christ's example only underlines our inability to perfectly model our lives after Him. Therefore, in God's gracious provision, Jesus is also our substitute. His perfect performance is accepted in the place of our deficient performance, His death is accepted in the place of the eternal death that we deserve.

To be our substitute, the writer of Hebrews points out, Jesus' human nature had to be completely sinless. Only thus could He offer the one permanently valid sacrifice, in contrast to the repeated sacri-

fices offered by the Israelite priests: "Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself" (Heb. 7:26, 27, NIV).

I'm thankful for a human Jesus—the one true man, the one perfect sacrifice.

D. F. M.

1. The Logos article characterizes Christ as a "re-doer" and "un-doer." Identify and discuss specific ways in which Christ fulfills these functions.

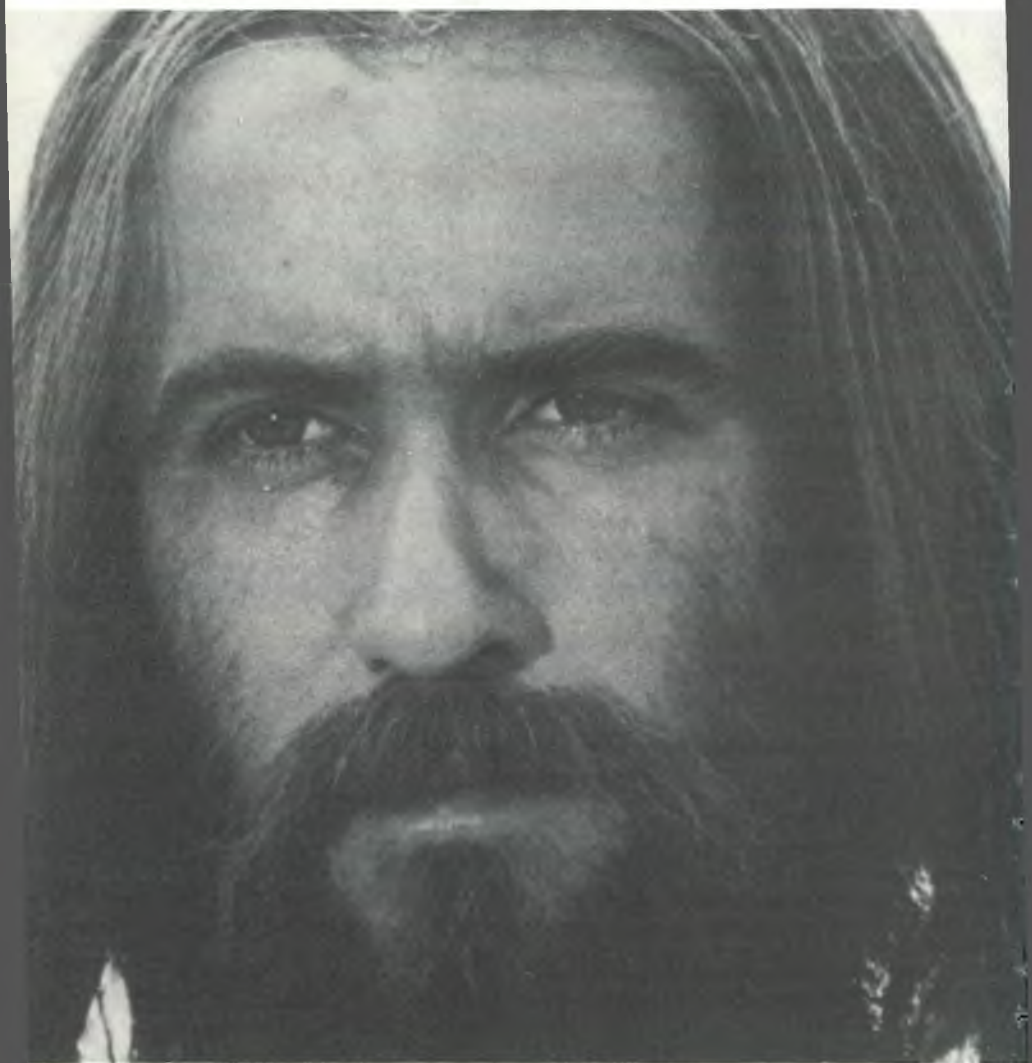
REACT
Lesson 7

Re-doer

Un-doer

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
2. Both the Logos and Opinion articles refer to Christ as the divine life-giver. In practical terms, how is this life imparted to us today? How does the fully human and fully divine nature of Christ fit into this life-giving process?
3. Why do you think Ellen White warned so strongly against leaving the "slightest impression upon humans minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ?" What dangers might be involved in attributing to Christ sinful desires totally similar to ours.
4. How do you reconcile the two apparently contradictory statements by Ellen White cited in the Opinion article? What about the debate over the nature of Christ? Does it really make any difference which side is right, since everyone involved agrees that Christ is fully divine, human, and sinless?
5. After studying this week's lesson, write in your own words (50 or less) your understanding of the nature of Christ. What questions remain in your mind?
-

A Suffering Messiah



**"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows,
and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3, NIV).**

Lesson 8, February 13-19

Our Brother in Sorrow

by James Hayward, Jr.

Yesterday I attended a small-town July 4 celebration. There were the usual festive activities: a bake sale, artists demonstrating pottery and stained-glass techniques, volunteer fire departments competing in a hose-rolling contest, a pet show, and a colorful jostling sea of faces. Amid all the mirth and confusion the presence of one young lady caught my attention. I guessed her age to be in the early twenties. She was beautiful. Her eyes were dark, gentle, and sensitive. But unlike the rest of us, she had no arms. She had doubtless been victim to her handicap since birth. Later, I saw her sitting on the grass, staring into the surrounding crowd. I felt strangely guilty holding my sno-cone in her presence. Why should I enjoy a pair of arms and hands when she had none? How many times had she heard the cruel taunts of insensitive children, or how often had she been ignored by adults pretending not to see. If only I could make her whole! But I could not, and because I could not, her hurt was my sorrow.

At another, perhaps more impersonal, level I am deeply grieved as I watch the major world powers daily adding to their arsenals of nuclear weapons, now more than 50,000 strong. These harbingers of homicide and horror pack enough power to completely unravel the fabric of society and totally undo the life support system of the planet. In fact, it is doubtful that any human life could survive long-term following an all-out nuclear exchange. What is the future of my family

and friends within such a world? Of what value is anything I do against such ghastly prospects? Life becomes a festering, putrefying, terrifying voyage into oblivion. Sorrow and grief, indeed, constitute our heritage and the heritage of our children.

Jesus, too, was a man of sorrows and grief. As we watch Him chase the money-changers out of the temple courtyard (Mark 11:15-18), weep over the prospects for Jerusalem's unbelieving population (Luke 19:41-44), and mourn over the death of Lazarus (John 11:32-37), we glimpse some of the pain that, as a fellow human, He shared with us.

But Jesus' emotional suffering was even more intense than that which we feel. For, as the Christ, He possessed a keener sense of right and wrong, a more realistic understanding of what separation from God actually means, and a more certain vision of the prospects for sinful humanity. And perhaps worst of all, He endured rejection by the majority of His contemporaries, at the same time knowing that He held the only key to their salvation.

Despite His suffering, Jesus was not given to defeat and despair. He continued to do what He could to improve lives of people. And today we enjoy the same opportunity that was His. By giving of ourselves to others, we live the life of Christ in our time, a life which, regardless of the cruelty, the oppression, and the fear we all experience, provides us and those with whom we share every reason to live.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**

James Hayward, Jr. is assistant professor of biology at Union College.

February 13
Sunday

Man of Sorrows

LOGOS "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:3). In this prophetic description, Isaiah foretold the treatment Jesus would receive. Even a glance at Jesus' life reveals how true this prophecy was. In numerous ways he was despised, rejected, and not recognized.

Soon after Christ's birth, King Herod was gathering important information on the child from his counselors and the visiting Magi, determined to find and slay this infant rival (see Matt. 2:1-15).

As a young man, Jesus was asked to speak in the Nazareth synagogue (his home church), and he gave a profound message from Scripture and illustration, speaking of His mission to "preach the gospel to the poor . . . heal the brokenhearted . . . preach deliverance. . . set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." But his home church did not accept his message too warmly, and tried to make Him take a long walk off a tall cliff (Luke 4:18-29)!

While being rejected in His own church may have hurt very deeply, Jesus was concerned less for the medium, Himself, than the message. He wished to support with examples (see verses 25-27 of Luke 4) what He had said in verse 24: "No prophet is accepted in his own country." He hoped to point out how preoccupied they were with His potential for miracle-working while they had neglected the poor, the broken hearted, those in bondage, and "the bruised," injured people. Instead, the examples He gave filled them with rage and their nationalistic pride provoked them to mob Him.

But the Bible also repeatedly portrays Christ as a charismatic sort of man; one whom victims of disease drop in on unexpectedly for healing (Mark 2:4) and contentedly touch the hem of His robe to be healed (Matt. 9:20), one who blesses the little children as they come to Him (Matt. 19:13-15), and gives practical counsel for salvation to one of the most promising and prominent young men of the day (Matt. 19:21). With such a thriving ministry, how could Christ feel "despised and rejected of men"?

In probing the roots of His popularity, John 6 provides an insight to the expectations of the Jewish people. After asking Jesus how He had found transportation to a speaking engagement, one of His questioners was met with the incisive observation: "The truth of the matter is that you want to be with Me because I feed you, not because you believe in Me" (vs. 26, TLB). Many followed Him simply for the sake of physical and economic well-being. They preferred temporal bread rather than the Bread of Life.

This was the attitude which filled Jesus with sorrow and motivated him to conclude: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt 23:37). By failing to recognize His mission of bringing them together in a brotherhood greater than any social caste or national movement, they had brought Him suffering greater than any hatred or rejection could inflict.

T. K. S.

The Suffering Saviour

selected by Lisa Wilson

The plan by which alone man's salvation could be secured, involved all heaven in its infinite sacrifice. The angels could not rejoice as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption; for they saw that man's salvation must cost their loved Commander unutterable woe. . . . He must descend . . . to endure . . . sorrow, shame, and death. . . . He would . . . humble Himself as a man, and by His own experience become acquainted with the sorrows and temptations which man would have to endure. All this would be necessary in order that He might be able to succor them that should be tempted. Hebrews 2:18.¹

As the condition of the people began to open to His mind, He saw that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision.² [The Rabbis] were angry because He did not obey their dictates. Failing to convince Him, they sought Joseph and Mary, and set before them His course of non-compliance. Thus He suffered rebuke and censure.³

He could not witness a wrong act without pain which it was impossible to disguise. . . . Because the life of Jesus condemned evil, He was opposed, both at home and abroad. His unselfishness and integrity were commented on with a sneer. His forbearance and kindness were termed cowardice.

Of the bitterness that falls to the lot of humanity, there was no part which Christ did not taste. There were those who tried to cast contempt upon Him because of His birth, and even in His childhood He had to meet with their scornful looks and evil whisperings. . . . Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged.⁴

Jesus assures His disciples of God's sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart. . . . In all our afflictions He is afflicted.⁵

Jesus wept. In His tears there was a sorrow as high above human sorrow as heavens are above the earth. . . . It was not only because of the scene before Him that Christ wept. The weight of the grief of ages was upon Him. He saw the terrible effects of the transgression of God's law. . . . He saw the suffering and sorrow, tears and death, that were to be the lot of men. . . . The woes of the sinful race were heavy upon His soul, and the fountain of His tears was broken up as He longed to relieve all their distress.⁶

His tender, pitying heart is ever awakened to sympathy by suffering. He weeps with those that weep, and rejoices with those that rejoice.⁷

Persecution will spread the light. The servants of Christ will be brought before the great men of the world, who, but for this, might never hear the gospel. . . . Those who reject the truth will stand to accuse and oppress the disciples. But under loss and suffering, even death, the Lord's children are to reveal the meekness of their divine Example.⁸

TESIMONY

Key text:
Phil. 1:29

The throb of every pain felt vibrates to the Father's heart.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 84.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 533, 534.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 533.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

Lisa Wilson is a sophomore office administration major at Union College.

February 15
Tuesday

Lincoln, Christ and Suffering

by George Gibson

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Luke 12:4

We often worry about the wrong things. When we considered the topic of suffering, our thoughts automatically turn to physical suffering. Christ warned us against that very tendency—"I tell you, as friends of mine, that you need not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but afterward cannot do anything more" (Luke 12:4, Phillips). Christ suffered for many reasons that we tend to forget. His birth made Him different. His hometown turned against Him. His brothers and mother did not really understand His mission and complicated His life. Those who had received careful instruction appeared to turn on Him. He was pained by those to whom He offered salvation and yet would not accept that priceless gift. His heart was wrenched as He saw the pain sin inflicted on close friends of His. And many of those gifted with talent and intelligence used those abilities to attempt to cause Jesus to make a mistake.

There can be real value in suffering for us in our individual growth. Few people seriously think about what they might be doing wrong when things are going well. For that very reason, it is likely that God is unable to bless us to the extent He would like to. When things go unexpectedly bad, almost everyone begins to carefully ponder his past and his future.

Our need is to be devoted to a Person and a cause. Only then will we be able to hold a proper perspective toward career success, toward the types of cars or homes that we should have, toward what sort of friends to have, and toward the suffering that comes our way. Even suffering which comes from unjust treatment can be held in proper perspective when we are devoted to a Person and a cause.

Abraham Lincoln was called to face the greatest crisis our country had known since its inception. He did not possess the administrative experience suitable to the need. Early in the war, a series of circumstances combined to intensify his suffering. He had just survived a plot on his life in Baltimore, and had received other threats on his life. Both of his children, Willie and Tad, had come down with fevers and only Tad recovered. His wife, Mary, was despondent, and thus Lincoln was deprived of the help and encouragement he needed. The war was going badly and Lincoln turned to General George McClellan and asked him to lead the armies in the East. One November evening in 1861, Lincoln, along with his personal secretary and the Secretary of State, William H. Seward, went to discuss war strategy with McClellan. McClellan was out, so the three waited in the parlor. When McClellan returned, he snuck upstairs to bed. Lincoln, of course, realized that he had been purposely snubbed. As he made the way back to the White House, he quietly commented that it was not a time to worry about personal attacks. Only devotion to a cause carried Lincoln through rough times and perplexing problems he faced.

Christ was also devoted to a cause. He asks that we, too, take up the cross and follow Him and His cause. Otherwise, our focus will be on ourselves and our problems and we will be fearing the wrong thing.

by Sheila Bova

Rejected by Family and Friends

HOW TO

Key text:

1 Peter 4:13

Have you ever asked a question and then wished you hadn't? This happened to me one Christmas. It was such a simple question—"Where are you going for the holidays?" I could immediately see that the question brought suffering.

"No where," he responded. "My home is the dorm. Since I became an Adventist, I have not been welcome at home."

My heart went out to that student and I was reminded that Jesus, too, suffered for his beliefs and actions. He was rejected by friends and family alike when He returned to Nazareth. He was so much despised that an attempt was even made on His life.

How can we learn from Jesus' way of handling this rejection?

1. We can learn from Jesus by studying the record of His life—the four Gospels. No more practical way exists to see how Jesus handled His life than to go to the record of His life.

2. In the Gospels, we learn that Jesus handled rejection by making new friends. Think of His relationship with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. He was always welcome at their home in Bethany. It was here that "He found a sincere welcome, and pure holy friendship. Here He could speak with simplicity and perfect freedom, knowing that His words would be understood and treasured."¹

Christian fellowship is a wonderful gift. Each person in a Christian circle can give the encouragement and support that every member needs.

So seek out Christian friends and they will help you overcome that feeling of loneliness. Do not cut off all contact with non-Christians, though, in fear of being rejected. Remember, Christians are the salt of the earth, and salt of necessity mixes with food.

3. We learn from the Gospels that Jesus dealt with rejection by praying. Jesus was always in constant communication with His Father, and the Father was anxiously waiting to answer His prayers. The same can hold true with us. Take your sufferings to God and He will listen and sustain you.

Yes, Jesus was rejected by some of His family and friends, just as some of us are. We can gain hope, however, by remembering "of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor."²

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 524.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

Freedom to Suffer

by Eric M. Graham

OPINION

Key text:
2 Corinthians
4:7-11

The questions are always the same; the circumstances vary. Our minds are stunned by televised visions of victims dead and alive being pulled from the icy river. An airplane departing National Airport crashes into a bridge, scores die—or cancer claims a single loved one's life. We mourn. We weep. We protest and take safeguards. We ask questions, but we don't expect answers.

Why do we suffer? Why does God allow it? Why Christ, two thousand years ago? Why me? Why?

Natural questions. Perhaps the first questions we ask; they should not be the last!

One important part of the answer shocks some and puzzles others. **We cannot, in any way, understand or come to terms with human suffering, ours or Christ's, until we have understood and come to terms with human sin. Furthermore, we cannot understand sin until we understand freedom.**

Freedom makes sin possible. If God had determined that we should be good no matter what, He would have programmed us like protozoa or migratory birds. That would have precluded the power to paint a picture or take a bribe; to heal a patient or blow up a country. But freedom *is* ours; the power to choose, to choose life or death. It is ours.

We are freedom; we are freedom limited by nature, reason and ourselves. Because of this, evil is possible, hurt is possible, pettiness and cruelty are possible, because we are free. Freedom makes sin possible. **And sin makes suffering possible.**

Within the Episcopal church service there is a section referred to as the "General Confession" in which the congregation confesses aloud their sinfulness. It's important. The congregation acknowledges that while differing in virtues, they are alike in failures. The Confession means we recognize that we are rich in part because others are poor. It means we have opportunities because others do not. It means you and I at times enjoy an easy conscience because we have forgotten the consequences.

A strong concept. But given the wreck at the D.C. bridge, given the lost loved one, it's not too strong. If one feels and understands the corporate nature of human sin, one understands how pathetic as well as how poignant are such questions as, "Why did this happen to me?" and "What did I do to deserve this?"

Perhaps the real question ought to be "God, why did you make us free: Why didn't you make us to follow in-built rules and regimens?"

When I contemplate the frightful possibility of nuclear war or the devastation a single human being with a gun, car, or bomb can accomplish, I want to say to God, "You shouldn't have made us free. It was a mistake. You put too much faith in us. We're not up to it. Look what we're doing to ourselves."

God is silent to my question and that silence is God's answer. In that silence we can hear God say, "But I have made you free. I have given you freedom. I will not take back that gift, so live with it's responsibility."

The question then is not, "How shall I escape freedom?", or "How shall I escape suffering," but "What shall I do with my freedom," and

“What shall I do with my suffering?” “Will my suffering bring me closer to the God who will not save me from suffering?”

If freedom makes sin possible, and if sin makes suffering possible, then we must say one thing more: **Suffering makes faith possible.**

I have known the kinds of both psychic and body pain that did not ennoble me at the time of its occurrence. It totally absorbed my attention. I was not thinking of anyone else, least of all, God. But that pain, once endured and survived, in time, in a long, long time, became part of my consciousness which has brought me closer to other people and I hope, closer to God. I would not choose to have that pain again, but I am grateful for what that pain has taught me.

Suffering is a fate that none of us would choose. Once endured, however, it is an opportunity, a terrible opportunity, and at the same time, a wonderful one. It helps us see how much we've been given on this earth—it sensitizes us to the earth's marvels; each other, friends, family and fellow believers, work to do, food to eat, words to appreciate and the gift of time itself in which to know God and ourselves.

For the Christian, the long path that begins in freedom and leads through sin and suffering ends in glory. That is the promise.

Thanks be to God who gave us *freedom*, through His Son.

1. From your study of the lesson and the life of Christ in general, identify some specific ways in which He responded to the suffering and persecution He experienced. Are these ways applicable to our lives today?
2. George Gibson (Evidence) comments that when things are going well, people are less likely to concern themselves with God. What attitudinal or behavioral steps might be taken to help one develop a relationship with God that is less affected by varying circumstances? If suffering drives us closer to God, should we seek to bring more suffering upon ourselves for the sake of an improved relationship with Him?
3. Ellen White writes (see Testimony) that “Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father’s heart . . .” Why does God allow suffering to continue when He is so intensely aware of it, even to the point of experiencing it Himself? What would we think of a human father who, fully aware of his child’s suffering, apparently does nothing about it? Or is God doing something?
4. What is your reaction to Eric Graham’s observations (Opinion) regarding freedom as the root of suffering? Do you think freedom is worth the price of the vast suffering of humanity?

REACT
Lesson 8

A Week to Remember



"And being in anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44, NIV).

Lesson 9, February 20-26

“He Could’ve Knocked Those Ole Guys”

by Ruthita Fike

In an age of Space Invaders and Pac Man it is difficult to understand how the world’s greatest hero allowed Himself to be viciously nailed to a cross. My cradle roll Sabbath School class recently pondered the issue. One of the most vocal six-year-olds blurted, “He could’ve knocked those ole guys!”

It’s true, He could have. But He didn’t. Why? Is it because the Bible teaches passivism and a “turn the other cheek” attitude? If that is the reason, then several other questions come to mind. Should a man mugged on a city street not defend himself? What if his child is with him? Political questions arise also. Should Britain have ignored Argentina’s attack on the Falklands?

But, the real question is, what is the principle behind Jesus’ failure to defend Himself during the ordeal of the passion week and particularly during His crucifixion? The answer lies in an understanding of the ugliness of sin. It is a basic law of the universe that sin cannot be ignored. It requires a penalty, and the penalty is death. In order for any of us to be saved, Jesus had to die.

That was His entire mission on earth—to die. He could not defend Himself from the malicious Roman soldiers, because if he had, we would all die—eternally.

This week’s lesson discusses the suffering Jesus experienced as He brought His mission to its culmination.

In Gethsemane He said, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Mark 14:34, NIV).

The Sanhedrin “condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists and said ‘Prophesy!’ And the guards took him and beat him” (vs. 64, 65).

The crowd outside Pilate’s court shouted “Crucify him!” (15:13).

The soldiers “wove a crown of thorns and put it on him . . . then they led him out to crucify him” (15:17, 20).

Why did Jesus Christ, the omnipotent Creator of all, willingly become a slaughtered lamb? What does His suffering mean for the way we live our lives? These questions underly our study for this week.

INDRO- DUCTION

A Lesson Lived

LOGOS I have come to admire the work of teachers. From preschool to postgraduate school, outstanding teachers seem to possess an admirable combination of qualities which enable them to deal with varying minds, sympathize with the students' needs, and communicate their ideas effectively.

Jesus, too, was a teacher. The word "teach" is used about twenty times by or about Jesus in the NT, and unquestionably the word is appropriate. At the age of 12, about the time many boys today start hanging around the video arcade, Jesus was reasoning with Ph.D.'s in the temple, "both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:46, 47). They were not dealing with an intellectual weakling, but One who continued to "increase in wisdom" as He grew older.

Christ went beyond the temples and synagogues, however, to teach the masses of people gathered in fields, on hillsides, and in public meeting places in small towns everywhere. "And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . they that mourn . . . the meek . . . they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . the merciful . . . the pure in heart . . . the peacemakers . . . they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake . . . Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matt. 5:2-12).

He taught the blessedness of poverty, suffering and meekness, yet He exercised another of the qualities He listed—mercy—to alleviate those things. He went about "preaching the Good News about the kingdom, and healing people who had all kinds of disease and sickness" (Matt. 4:23, TEV).

He had also spoken of the blessedness of persecution, and many of His listeners likely thought such words reflected idealistic but abnormal response to such mistreatment. Through the last week of His life, the Passion, Jesus taught by example that His words had not been empty. During that week, He endured:

- 1) Betrayal (Matt. 26:21).
- 2) Rejection. "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isa. 53:3, NIV).
- 3) Abuse. "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting" (Isa. 50:6, NIV).
- 4) Ridicule. ". . . They blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, 'Prophecy!' " (Mark 14:65, NIV).
- 5) Torture. "Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head" (John 19:1, 2, NIV).

In this suffering He demonstrated that persecution, paradoxically, gives reason to rejoice. "Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted" (Matt. 5:11, TEV).

The teacher not only talked and taught, but showed through the Passion that suffering is as distinctively Christian as mercy, purity, and peace.

T. K. S.

No Greater Love

A study of today's key text on the trial of Jesus powerfully confronts us with the stark contrast between the protagonists in the great controversy:

"Wonder, O Heavens! and be astonished, O earth! Behold the oppressor and the oppressed. A maddened throng enclose the Saviour of the world. Mocking and jeering are mingled with the coarse oaths of blasphemy. His lowly birth and humble life are commented upon by the unfeeling mob. His claim to be the Son of God is ridiculed, and the vulgar jest and insulting sneer are passed from lip to lip.

"Satan led the cruel mob in its abuse of the Saviour. It was his purpose to provoke Him to retaliation if possible, or to drive Him to perform a miracle to release Himself, and thus break up the plan of salvation. One stain upon His human life, one failure of His humanity to endure the terrible test, and the Lamb of God would have been an imperfect offering, and the redemption of man a failure. But He who by a command could bring the heavenly host to His aid,—He who could have driven that mob in terror from His sight by the flashing forth of His divine majesty,—submitted with perfect calmness to the coarsest insult and outrage.

"Christ's enemies had demanded a miracle as evidence of His divinity. They had evidence far greater than any they had sought. As their cruelty degraded His torturers below humanity into the likeness of Satan, so did His meekness and patience exalt Jesus above humanity, and prove His kinship to God. His abasement was the pledge of His exaltation. The blood-drops of agony that from His wounded temples flowed down His face and beard were the pledge of His anointing with 'the oil of gladness' as our great high priest.

"Satan's rage was great as he saw that all the abuse inflicted upon the Saviour had not forced the least murmur from His lips. Although He had taken upon Him the nature of man, He was sustained by a Godlike fortitude, and departed in no particular from the will of His Father."¹

Abraham suffered intensely in obeying the command to sacrifice Isaac, but God's suffering in Christ on our behalf is vastly greater:

"God gave his Son to a life of humiliation, self-denial, poverty, toil, reproach, and to the agonizing death of crucifixion. But there was no angel to bear the joyful message, 'It is enough; you need not die, my well-beloved Son.' Legions of angels were sorrowfully waiting, hoping that, as in the case of Isaac, God would at the last moment prevent his shameful death. But, angels were not permitted to bear any such message to God's dear Son. The humiliation in the judgment hall, and on the way to Calvary, went on. He was mocked, derided, and spit upon. He endured the jeers, taunts, and revilings of those who hated him, until upon the cross he bowed his head and died.

"Could God give us any greater proof of his love than in thus giving his Son to pass through this scene of suffering? And as the gift of God to man was a free gift, his love infinite, so his claims upon our confidence, our obedience, our whole heart, and the wealth of our affections, are correspondingly infinite."²

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 18:
28-19:16

"His abasement was the pledge of His exaltation."

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 734, 735.
2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 369.

The Soul's Battle in the Garden

by William Barclay

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Matthew
26:36-46

"The salvation of the world was at risk in the Garden."

Editor's Note: The fiercest struggle and greatest victory in Jesus' life came in Gethsemane. Following are Barclay's comments on that experience:

(i) We see the *agony* of Jesus . . . Here Jesus had his supreme struggle to submit his will to the will of God. No one can read this story without seeing the intense reality of that struggle. This was no play-acting; it was a struggle in which the outcome swayed in the balance. The salvation of the world was at risk in the Garden of Gethsemane, for even then Jesus might have turned back, and God's purpose would have been frustrated.

At this moment all that Jesus knew was that he must go on, and ahead there lay a cross. In all reverence we may say that here we see Jesus learning the lesson that everyone must some day learn—how to accept what he could not understand. All he knew was that the will of God imperiously summoned him on. Things happen to every one of us in this world that we cannot understand; it is then that faith is tried to its utmost limits; and at such a time it is sweetness to the soul that in Gethsemane Jesus went through that too.

(ii) We see the *loneliness* of Jesus. He took with him his three chosen disciples; but they were so exhausted with the drama of these last days and hours that they could not stay awake. And Jesus had to fight his battle all alone. That also is true of every man. There are certain things a man must face and certain decisions a man must make in the awful loneliness of his own soul; there are times when other helpers fail and comforts flee; but in that loneliness there is for us the presence of One who, in Gethsemane, experienced it and came through it.

(iii) Here we see the *trust* of Jesus. We see that trust even better in Mark's account, where Jesus begins his prayer: 'Abba, Father' (Mark 14:36). There is a world of loveliness in this word *Abba*, which to our western ears is altogether hidden, unless we know the facts about it. Joachim Jeremias, in his book *The Parables of Jesus*, writes thus: 'Jesus's use of the word *Abba* in addressing God is unparalleled in the whole of Jewish literature. . . . It was an everyday family word, which no one had ventured to use in addressing God. Jesus did. He spoke to his heavenly Father in as childlike, trustful, and intimate a way as a little child to its father.' . . . Even when he did not fully understand, even when his one conviction was that God was urging him to a cross, he called *Abba*, as might a little child. Here indeed is trust, a trust which we must also have in that God whom Jesus taught us to know as Father.

(iv) We see the *courage* of Jesus. 'Rise' said Jesus, 'let us be going. He who betrays me is near.' Celsus, the pagan philosopher who attacked Christianity, used that sentence as an argument that Jesus tried to run away. It is the very opposite. 'Rise,' he said. 'The time for prayer, and the time for the garden is past. Now is the time for action. Let us face life at its grimmest and men at their worst.' Jesus rose from his knees to go out to the battle of life. That is what prayer is for. In prayer a man kneels before God that he may stand erect before men. In prayer a man enters heaven that he may face the battles of earth.

Excerpted from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 2 (Revised edition), translated with an introduction and interpretation by William Barclay, pp. 348-350. Copyright © 1975 by William Barclay. Used by permission of The Westminster Press.

February 23
Wednesday

William Barclay is a world-renowned Scottish New Testament interpreter.

Crown of Compassion

by Susan Zimmerman

As we study the Passion week we naturally think of the crown of thorns. But it was really a crown of compassion that distinguished Christ.

We catch a glimpse of the crown of compassion when we see Jesus before the awesome Pilate. In the judgment hall Christ worked for Pilate's soul. The vacillating Pilate was more precious to Christ than His own suffering. Never did Christ exchange His crown of compassion for one of hatred or reproach.

Christians are expected to wear a crown of compassion. Yet, at times, we wear our crowns crookedly, and at times, upside down. How can we be as faithful in wearing our crown of compassion as Christ was?

Christ followed three principles:

1. **Consider your brother first.** Without question we are to think more of our brother than ourselves. We can follow Christ's example when He invited the small children to come to Him. The children knew He would be gentle and listen sympathetically to their tales of distress.

This same Jesus was also thoughtful of mankind's temporal necessities. In the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus knew many people were fatigued. Many had been standing for hours. Jesus urged the people to sit and eat. Christ could have said, "People, what I'm saying will point you in the ways of heaven. Let's not eat. There's not time to lose." But He didn't, and the people were fed both physically and spiritually.

Treating people from all walks of life with acceptance and dignity is wearing the crown of compassion.

2. **Bring people to God.** The cleansing of the temple is a thought-provoking example of the compassion of Christ, and how He treated people.

When Christ entered the temple He took in the whole scene. He saw the corrupt money changers, animals roaming about His temple, and loud confusion everywhere. But, with his omnipotent mind He also saw how the priests and rulers eventually would turn the poor from the temple and prevent the needy from hearing the gospel. He saw how a dark curtain would be drawn between God and sinners. He knew the motives of the irreligious ones. His faithful children could not see the kingdom if the temple was not righted, and soon!

When we choose to bring people to Christ, we willingly do things which onlookers might not understand. This is wearing the crown of compassion.

3. **Let no man take your crown.**¹ Christ and His followers made many unpopular decisions. They chose to love the unloveable, to suffer ridicule from friends, and the curse of the world. Through sufferings and unpopularity the crown of compassion must never waiver. Christ has promised us His strength and His refuge.

Gentleness, kindness, and longsuffering are part of what it means to wear the crown of compassion. Yet, also shining through Christ's life are traits of firmness, insistence on right doing, correction, and strength. Christians are to be "enablers" for those who need help. In this way we are sharing with Christ the crown of compassion.

HOW TO
Key text:
1 Peter 3:8

Susan Zimmerman is an instructor at George Stone School, Union College Elementary Lab School.

1. Ellen White, *Counsels on Education*, p. 105.

February 24
Thursday

Applying the Passion

by Kurt D. Davis

OPINION

Key text:
Hebrews 12:2-4

Have you ever felt guilty for not feeling guilty? That's a response we often have when we read about Jesus' sufferings. Reading through the accounts, we feel that unless we have a deep emotional response to every lash of the whip, or drop of blood, then somehow we aren't really appreciating the event. If we feel more emotion when watching The Holocaust on TV, we are inclined to doubt the sincerity of our experience. In trying to conjure up this "sincerity" we often dwell on the blood and gore, hoping that if we get feeling sick enough, perhaps the significance of it all will sink in.

Is this the response we're supposed to have to Jesus' suffering? If not, why not?

Two objections to this way of appreciating the passion suggest themselves at once. First, to be constantly measuring our experience by the fervor of our feelings is a discouraging thing because the focus is on the wrong object—self—and he's the one who needed the help in the first place. Besides, we could never feel guilty enough to be perfectly repentant. C. S. Lewis expressed the dilemma perfectly: "Only a bad person needs to repent: Only a good person can repent perfectly. The worse you are, the more you need it and the less you can do it. The only person who could do it perfectly would be a perfect person—and he would not need it."¹ It's easy to see the futility involved in this circular approach to applying the passion of Christ. So, how do we get off the merry-go-round?

We need to focus our attention on something a little more constant than ourselves—ergo, something external. Our assurance must be fixed on the fact that Jesus' suffering has somehow benefited us, though we may never fully grasp the weight of the gift. Who can take in the significance of the phrase, ". . . with his stripes we are healed"? (Isa. 53:5). That could occupy an eternity. We need to remember that it's not our feelings about the event that save us, it is the event itself. The depths of our appreciation will no doubt grow, but that is secondary.

"None of the canonical writers used Jesus' suffering to gain emotional leverage."

The second objection to trying to conjure emotional reactions from the passion is drawn from the precedent of the New Testament. None of the canonical writers used Jesus' sufferings to gain emotional leverage. All the accounts are extremely abrupt, using only statements of facts to carry the story. Neither do the sermons of the Apostles, as recorded in Acts, discuss the death of Jesus in an emotional way. It follows, then, that the purpose in *recording* the events must have been something other than to provide readers with apparatuses for emotional gymnastics. Also, it follows that the purpose *for the Passion* was something other than to produce an emotional response. The Passion was an objective, vicarious act for us. It should produce some response, but the primary benefit is in the fact of its accomplishment.

The *fact* of His suffering and death for us is the good news. Our emotional response to that suffering is always a secondary matter that should not tempt us to look inside, dwelling on our experience, where the assurance isn't.

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), p. 59.

1. The Logos article points out that Jesus stressed the rewards of suffering, and that He practiced what He preached, most graphically during the Passion week. What were the rewards of Jesus' suffering? In what ways might suffering be rewarding for us? Do you think the way of suffering is really superior to the way of ease and relative luxury that's within the grasp of most in the western world? Are there specific ways in which Christians are called to suffer today?
 2. A well-known statement by Ellen White advises us to spend a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the scenes of Christ's life, "especially the closing ones" (*Desires of Ages*, p. 83). Do you agree with Kurt Davis' (Opinion) contention that such contemplation should not be preoccupied with Christ's physical suffering? If so, what aspects of the "closing scenes" should be the focus of our meditation? What is the purpose of such meditation?
 3. In the Evidence article, Barclay comments that awareness of the agony and loneliness Jesus experienced in Gethsemane comforts us when we face similar experiences. Do you find the thought that Jesus experienced these things comforting? Why or why not?
With reference to Barclay's article, complete the following sentences if you feel they are applicable to your life. Be as specific as possible:
 - a) The agony Jesus experienced in Gethsemane helps me to . . .
 - b) The loneliness Jesus experienced in Gethsemane helps me to . . .
 - c) The trust Jesus demonstrated in Gethsemane helps me to . . .
 - d) The courage Jesus demonstrated in Gethsemane helps me to . . .
 4. Review the story of Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21:12, 13). Do you agree with the How To author that this was an act of compassion? Why or why not?
-

Calvary



“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24, NIV).

Lesson 10, February 27-March 5

Into the Line of Fire

by Philip G. Samaan

"Amid the noise and confusion of the attempt on President Ronald Reagan's life, ABC cameraman Hank Brown coolly held his ground, keeping his camera rolling. The moment shots rang out on his right, reporters, government officials and bystanders instinctively ducked for cover. But Brown stayed on his feet to capture a series of haunting images that by the day's end were burned into the national memory."¹

Agents Parr and McCarthy stepped into the line of fire, defying their human instincts to live by forming a shield around the President. Sometime before this tragic incident, Reagan was curious to observe that the Secret Service agents, in their target-practice, were shooting from an erect position instead of a crouching position. The president asked, "Doesn't that make you too big a target?" "That's just the point. We want to be a big target," an agent responded. "The reason we shoot standing up is to better protect your body with ours . . ."²

Calvary teaches us the same lesson—Jesus stepped into the line of fire by choice and out of love for humanity. Calvary is the prime example of how Jesus faced our suffering

and death head on—a big target, suspended erect between heaven and earth. Jesus, in His person, became our Shield. A Shield big enough to secure our standing in His righteousness and life, strong enough to withstand the darts of Satan, and to empower us to walk with Christ.

Calvary helps us see the condition of the world today as it really is: cold and selfish. People seek to be number one, causing others around them rejection and pain. They demand and assert their different rights. But Jesus did not demand His rights. He made Himself totally available to humanity, placing Himself at the disposal of "wicked hands" (Acts 2:23). And by doing that, He experienced real physical pain, mental anguish and emotional exhaustion. He was experiencing this even for those who were crucifying Him that day, becoming their Advocate in praying to the Father to forgive them for their ignorance.

How amazing and wonderful it is that in Calvary we have all of Jesus. He is totally committed to us in suffering and in victory. We share in His love, life, righteousness and destiny. Join us as we explore further in this lesson the wonder of Calvary.

INTRODUCTION

1. *Newsweek*, April 13, 1981, p. 107.
2. *Ibid.*

The Seven Last Words

LOGOS

"When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him" (Luke 23:33, NIV). How contrary to human norms and conventions that the cruel, repugnant death of a Jewish teacher of only local notoriety would become the central event of history. Yet the significance of Calvary is so deep and rich that even after 2,000 years its full meaning eludes us. A look at Jesus' seven sayings from the cross can give us a start in understanding what He experienced there for us.

1) "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34, NIV). While He was suffering the intense physical agony of crucifixion, the heart of Jesus was with those who caused His death. His magnanimity in praying for our forgiveness is unfathomable. It was this ardent concern for sinners, this taking of our iniquities and sorrows upon Himself (Isa. 53:4, 5) that caused the deepest suffering for Jesus. Thielicke explains: "Anyone who sees a dear friend going to the dogs, and is unable to help as he rushes step by step to destruction knows that this is like death for himself, too. For loving means complete sharing, and the misfortune of the other means pain for oneself. . . ."

" . . . In a single glance He [Jesus] takes in all the guilt which was ever incurred and all the lostness in which man was ever tangled.

"Nor does He see it all in an omniscient diagnosis of the sickness of others which does not basically affect Himself. He sees it like a doctor seeing an X-ray plate the fatal disease of his own dear son. It all weighs like an intolerable burden on His own heart."¹

2) "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43, NIV). On this day, betrayed and forsaken by friends, tortured, ridiculed, impaled on a cross as the lowest of criminals, Jesus could make the astounding promise of paradise to a fellow sufferer. Somehow the thief could perceive, as Paul would later, that despite such apparent foolishness, the cross is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23).

3) "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Dear woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother'" (John 19:26, 27, NIV).

"There is something infinitely moving in the fact that Jesus in the agony of the Cross, when the salvation of the world hung in balance, thought of the loneliness of his mother in the days ahead. . . . He was Mary's eldest son, and even in the moment of cosmic battle, he did not forget the simple things that lay near home. To the end of the day, even on the cross, Jesus was thinking more of the sorrow of others than of his own."²

4) "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?'—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Mark 15:34, NIV).

"In war the chaplain's message is accepted only when he is ready to go to the front lines and does not merely offer cheap comfort from the rear. Jesus fights on the very front lines at Calvary. Nothing human is alien to Him. He places, or better, implicates Himself so fully in our lostness that He must call out and cry in our place: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

"In this saying He is altogether our Brother. In His physical ag-

ony—under terrible sufferings and thirst moving in the sunshine to a graceless end—He bears to His Father all the afflictions of hospitals, battlefields and deathbeds. And with the afflictions He bears also the most severe and constricting anxiety which we undergo when we can no longer see the hand of the Father in what befalls us.”³

5) “**I thirst**” (John 19:28). Though Jesus’ greatest agony was spiritual, He did undergo the same grisly, physical suffering on the cross that any human would. He did not go to the cross as a purely spiritual being with only a phantom body, as the Gnostic heresy taught, but as a vulnerable, feeling man.

6) “**It is finished**” (John 19:30). “Jesus died with the cry of the Victor on His lips. This is not the moan of the defeated, nor the sigh of patient resignation. It is the triumphant recognition that He has now fully accomplished the work He came to do.”⁴

7) “**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit**” (Luke 23:46, NIV). Only moments after his cry of abandonment, Jesus could be assured that the hands of God were there to receive Him. After passing through the hell of separation from the Father, He could rest His spirit in the Father’s hands, the atonement completed.

“Thus, the message which we now have to proclaim from Calvary’s hill,” concludes Thielicke, “is that there hangs there One on whom our burden rests and on whom we may lay it—our care, our anxious fear of the future, our guilt, our broken homes, the many bankruptcies we experience in life. Here hangs One who for us has burst open, or rather prayed open, the way to the Father. And if I am at my wits’ end and when the hostile power of conscience attacks and accuses me, if I am oppressed by sickness and misfortune, if I am forsaken by men, if I can no longer see the divine hand or higher thoughts, then, I may confidently repeat what the dying Saviour dared cry in His last agony; ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ And as I say this, the everlasting hands are there into which I may entrust myself and from which I can receive all things; and the comforting angels will come and lead me. For the way is open; One has gone before.”⁵

D. F. M.

1. Helmut Thielicke, *The Silence of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), reprinted in *A Thielicke Trilogy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), pp. 177, 178.

2. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, Vol. 2* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 257.

3. Thielicke, pp. 178, 179.

4. Leon Morris, *New International Commentary on the New Testament - The Gospel of John* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), p. 815.

5. Thielicke, pp. 181, 182.

At The Cross

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Matthew
27:32-51

A Crucified King

As soon as Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was lifted by strong men, and with great violence thrust into the place prepared for it. This caused the most intense agony to the Son of God. Pilate then wrote an inscription in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and placed it upon the cross, above the head of Jesus. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." This inscription irritated the Jews. In Pilate's court they had cried, "Crucify Him!" "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). They had declared that whoever should acknowledge any other king was a traitor. Pilate wrote out the sentiment they had expressed. No offense was mentioned, except that Jesus was the King of the Jews. The inscription was a virtual acknowledgment of the allegiance of the Jews to the Roman power. It declared that whoever might claim to be the King of Israel, would be judged by them worthy of death. The priests had overreached themselves. When they were plotting the death of Christ, Caiaphas had declared it expedient that one man should die to save the nation. Now their hypocrisy was revealed. In order to destroy Christ, they had been ready to sacrifice even their national existence.

The priests saw what they had done, and asked Pilate to change the inscription. They said, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said I am King of the Jews." But Pilate was angry with himself because of his former weakness, and he thoroughly despised the jealous and artful priests and rulers. He replied coldly, "What I have written I have written."

A higher power than Pilate or the Jews had directed the placing of that inscription above the head of Jesus. In the providence of God it was to awaken thought, and investigation of the Scriptures. The place where Christ was crucified was near to the city. Thousands of people from all lands were then at Jerusalem, and the inscription declaring Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah would come to their notice. It was a living truth, transcribed by a hand that God had guided. . . .

The thieves crucified with Jesus were placed "on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." This was done by the direction of the priests and rulers. Christ's position between the thieves was to indicate that He was the greatest criminal of the three. Thus was fulfilled the scripture, "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). But the full meaning of their act the priests did not see. As Jesus, crucified with the thieves, was placed "in the midst," so His cross was placed in the midst of a world lying in sin. And the words of pardon spoken to the penitent thief, kindled a light that will shine to the earth's remotest bounds. . . .

Sin's Crushing Enormity

In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by triumphant joy. All was oppressive gloom. It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. Christ saw how deep is the hold of sin upon the human heart, how few would be willing to break from its power.

"His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin."

March 1
Tuesday

He knew that without help from God, humanity must perish, and He saw multitudes perishing within reach of abundant help.

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All his life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. . . .

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured,—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face,—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin-bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.

The Victory Completed

Suddenly the gloom lifted from the cross, and in clear, trumpetlike tones, that seemed to resound throughout creation, Jesus cried, "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast, and died.

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor.

**"All that
He endured . . .
is for thee."**

How to Win a World

by Kurt D. Davis

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 12:31, 32

To the onlooking universe it must have seemed as though God had not really tried. After all, it was not much of a show that He put on for the watching worlds. Yes, He sent His best, but His best showed up as a plain-label peasant with a dubious (from a human standpoint) pedigree who in His lifetime made more enemies than friends. If anything it must have seemed a grand scheme gone wrong. The spectacular had become the specter. Was this any way to win a world?

Take Lucifer. He knew how to win a world. He beamed into God's garden wearing snake skin shoes, the latest tux, and gold, glittery wings. He won friends and influenced people like a graduate of a Dale Carnegie course. His pampered prey was taken in, and the world was his.

Then it was God's move. After all the time He had had to think it over it seemed a little anticlimactic. It would almost seem that God underestimated the task. Satan had taken some 4,000 years to turn a paradise into a pandemonium whose inhabitants were less than happy. It would be no problem to induce them back into the fold—right? Right. But that was before God played His final trump—the naked peasant on a thief's cross on an ugly hill. Was this rude scene God's countermove against the subtle suitor in the garden?

A beautiful tree, an ugly cross; a delightful garden, a rocky hill; an enchanting serpent, a naked corpse; Satan's temptation and God's temptation stand side by side, a study in parallel contrasts. Both were designed to win a world. One was a smashing success, the other—well, we are still working on it. Is Satan a more successful temptor than the very Creator of the beings being tempted? Yes, we have to admit it. The tree in the garden still attracts more people than the cross on the hill. It is a revolting Tree of Life that God planted in this world with its fruit of bloody flesh that promises life to its partakers. The River of Life that flowed from His veins is no more appealing. Is this any way to win a world?

“The offensive cross was the only way that the ultimate issues of existence could be settled.”

Why the offensive cross? It is Gideon's river. It is the Jew's stumbling block and the Gentile's foolishness. It is the winnowing fork in the Messiah's hand to purge His granary. It is the abrupt words of Jesus used to turn back would-be followers and estrange flattering multitudes. It is the divine method of winning the world that He wants to win—the real world of real people who seek to find the naked truth more pleasant than the enchanting lie. But couldn't He have found a more attractive way to win the world? Not in the ultimate sense, because really to win it He had to win its respect as well as its affection. The offensive cross was the only way that the ultimate issues of existence—the issues of sin, forgiveness, righteousness, and justice—could be settled in a sinful world. These issues confront man at the cross in a way that is not flattering, but if he will pause to look he will find the revealed truths compelling.

Two trees confront us like the roads in Frost's poem. Both are inviting—one to the senses, and one to the heart. Both were meant to win the world. In the end, those who choose the more attractive tree may *win* the world, but One has promised that those who choose the other will, after all, will *inherit* it.

Positioned for Death and Resurrection

by Ron Halvorsen

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, a great expositor of the Word of God said, "If we approach the cross for examination, it will evade us. If we approach it for contemplation, it will bewilder us. The only way to approach the cross is by identification."

How can I personally identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Perhaps today's key text will shed some light on this.

1. The crucifixion of self—"I am crucified with Christ. . . ."

2. Resurrection for service—"Nevertheless I live. . . ."

First, I must experience the death of self. How is this accomplished?

1. **Position yourself for death.** Simon of Cyrene was positioned for self-crucifixion. He was positioned to be crucified through identification with Christ in death. I have met many people like Simon in my evangelistic ministry who were positioned by sorrow, tragedy, trials, even by curiosity, to come to the meetings where they encountered Christ personally. Simon literally experienced the cross in his life through identification.

2. **Yield yourself fully to Christ.** "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness" (Romans 6:13, NIV). Each day, position yourself for crucifixion (die daily) and yield yourself to Christ. Let Him place the cross on you for that day.

3. **Reckon yourself dead.** The Bible says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). This is the signing of the death certificate. Just as Christ hung on the cross in death so I hang on Christ in death, identifying with Him in death. His was a selfless death, mine is a self-death.

Notice: By faith I am positioned, by faith I am yielded, by faith I have reckoned myself dead (signed the death certificate). Positioned in death for salvation, and positioned in resurrection for service. The resurrected life is a life of service in two ways:

1. **Positioning:** Most Christians find themselves between the Friday crucifixion and the Sunday resurrection—a Sabbath sleep. Death to self without resurrection to service is only a part of the good news. Self dies so it can effectively serve. You will notice from the reading of the scripture concerning our Lord's death that the cross was positioned for witness. It was erected on a hill not a platform. It was erected outside the walls of the city. It was positioned where the godless, the unbeliever could see it, positioned to capture men's hearts. Often today we spend most of our time and money in erecting buildings and establishing institutions. We act as if our death needs a mausoleum to preserve piety. But Christ never meant for the cross to be in the church, but the church to be a cross.

2. **Proclamation:** In my resurrection I am positioned to proclaim. On the morning of the resurrection the angel was positioned for witness: "He is not here, He is risen." The two disciples ran to tell the others. If there is no personal witness in my life, it is because I have not experienced the resurrection.

HOW TO

Key text:
Galatians 2:20

The Ultimate Command

by Clyde
Davidson

OPINION
Key Text:
John 13:34, 35

Sometimes I am amazed how little the Gospels speak about salvation. Of course they do speak about it, but it is not the most important theme. I see more reporting on Jesus' actions than on His words, and most of what He said was to explain what He did. Most of our salvation theology comes from Paul, not from the Gospels. The Adventist church and much of Christendom is concerned with salvation. To some Adventists salvation may be the most important doctrine. However, interest in salvation, by itself, can be very selfish. If you are solely preoccupied with your own salvation, you will not be concerned about others.

When I look at the cross I do see salvation, but here again it does not seem to be the deepest theme. Sure Christ died for our sin to give us salvation, but why did He do it? Because He loves us! Love is always the most important theme. Salvation is a result of that love. Everything He gives us and everything He told us is a result of that love. His whole life and ultimately His death showed us that love.

This may seem like an over discussed subject; we talk at least as much about love as we do about salvation. The kind of love I see at the cross and the kind of love we usually talk about, though, are very different. At the cross Jesus did not say much at all. Christ's love is an active love. It is a fighting love. Because He loves people He fought against everything that hurts people—social injustice, emotional heartache and failure, physical pain and abuse, spiritual degradation, etc. He fought actively all His life because He loved people. At the cross He finally won. Love will always fight regardless of the consequences to personal life or limb.

Now comes the hard part. Jesus commands us to love just as He loved. It is not natural for us to act like that, nor is it at all easy. We see plenty of social injustice, but we do not get involved because we might lose our jobs or we might have to give up some of our time. We see a lot of emotional hurt, but we do not reach out because our emotions are fragile and we might make fools of ourselves. We see physical pain and tell ourselves that it is none of our business. We see spiritual degradation all around us and we have become so numb that we hardly notice it. Because we do not love we are unhappy. Saved? Maybe. We know how to get salvation, but still we are guilty and unsatisfied.

Have you ever tried to love like that? You cannot. You don't have it in you. But that is why Jesus died on the cross; not only because He loves, but so we can love, too. He has already given us love, now He asks us to use it. Christianity is loving like Jesus loves.

1. This week's Introduction describes Jesus as stepping into the line of fire by going to the cross, shielding us from destruction. What, specifically, did Jesus shield us from at Calvary?
 2. As you contemplate Jesus' sufferings on Calvary, what three things are most significant to you?
 3. Ellen White (Testimony) concludes her discussion of Calvary by declaring Christ as victor, and Leon Morris comments similarly (Logos). In specific terms, how can the death of the cross be termed a victory?
 4. What sort of perspective (if any) does the cross give you on the following:
 - nuclear arms race
 - registration for the draft
 - competition in business/education/athleticsIdentify and discuss other contemporary concerns to which you think the cross speaks. Remember to relate your discussion to the cross, not just your general opinion of the particular subject.
 5. Kurt Davis (Evidence) contrasts Satan's slick, sense-pleasing method of winning the world with God's method—a stark, offensive cross. Is there a danger in evangelism (both Adventist and popular media Christianity) to smooth over the jarring offensiveness of the cross, and thereby more closely approximate the enemy's method than God's? Explain.
 6. Do you think G. Campbell Morgan is correct in saying that we should approach the cross by identification rather than examination or contemplation? How can we identify with the cross without examining and contemplating it.
 7. Do you agree with Clyde Davidson's (Opinion) comments that love is a deeper and more crucial theme than salvation? Why or why not?
-

It Is Finished



“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV).

Lesson 11, March 6-12

Those Who Knew Him

by Georgia Taggart

INTRODUCTION

"They watch in the tacit, grey stillness as He drops His head, and dies. 'The Romans and the priests have laid hold upon Jesus and crucified Him,' a haggard widow cackles to her companion, 'they have done well,' " writes Persian poet Kahlil Gibran from his unique perspective in *Jesus, the Son of Man: His Words and Deeds as Told by those Who Knew Him*.

Note that in the torrent of emotions which Gibran sees Jesus arousing in people there is one emotion which Christ definitely does not inspire—apathy. He deeply touched all He came into contact with.

Simon, the Cyrene: "I was on my way to the fields when I saw Him carrying His cross, and multitudes were following Him. Then I too walked beside Him. His burden stopped many a time, for His body was exhausted.

"Then a Roman soldier approached me, saying, 'Come, you are strong and firm built; carry the cross of this Man.' When I heard these words my heart swelled within me and I was grateful. And I carried His cross. . . . He placed His hand on my free shoulder. And we walked together towards the Hill of the Skull. But now I felt not the weight of the cross. I felt only His hand. And it was like the wing of a bird upon my shoulder.

"Then we reached the hill top, and there they were to crucify Him. And then I felt the weight of the tree."

Pontius Pilate: "Not long after [the Crucifixion], we left Syria, and from that day my wife has been a woman of sor-

row. Sometimes even here in this garden I see a tragedy in her face. I am told she talks much of Jesus to other women of Rome. And within myself I ask again and again, What is truth and what is not truth? Can it be that the Syrian is conquering us in the quiet hours of the night?

A man outside of Jerusalem, of Judas: "Judas came to my house that Friday, upon the eve of the passover; and he knocked at my door with force. When he entered I looked at him, and his face was ashen. His hands trembled like dry twigs in the wind, and his clothes were as wet as if he had stepped out from a river; for on that evening there were great tempests.

"And he said, 'I have delivered Jesus of Nazareth to His enemies and to my enemies.' Then Judas gnashed his teeth and he bent down his head. And when he spoke again he said, 'I have delivered Him up. And He was crucified this day. . . . When He died upon the cross, He died like a King. He died in the tempest as deliverers die, like vast men who live beyond the shroud and the stone.'

" 'And all the while He was dying, He was gracious, and He was kindly; and His heart was full of pity. He felt pity even for me who had delivered Him up.'

"I have pondered long since that day and I understand Judas. One man longed for a kingdom in which he was to be a prince. Another man desired a kingdom in which all men shall be princes."

A Finished Work Still Finishing

By H. Ward Hill

LOGOS

Atonement in its broadest sense must encompass the total eradication of evil resulting in a condition where all of God's creatures are at one with Him. Seventh-day Adventists have had difficulty teaching this concept since in some eyes it seems to fall short of fully appreciating the "all-sufficiency of the cross," or the "finished work at Calvary." To fundamentalist Christians this perceived failure seems to be the hallmark of heresy.

There was indeed a "finished" work at the cross—"rounded out to perfection" as G. Campbell Morgan said. But there was also a finished work mentioned in Gethsemane: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). And the word from Jesus Himself through John the Revelator is that there is another moment in history which is called the *finishing* point. Referring to Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, Jesus pictures a time when the "tabernacle of God is with men" and "God Himself shall be with them and be their God (Rev. 21:3). It is at this point that Jesus says, "It is done" (Rev. 21:6). The last paragraph in *The Great Controversy* describes this scene as follows: "From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love" (p. 762). Only once in the King James version of the New Testament do we find the word atonement." The same Greek word (katallagē) does appear elsewhere and is translated "reconciling" or "reconciliation" (Cf. Rom. 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

The cross no doubt has singular significance in reference to the atonement. From the perspective of offerings for sin, there is a once for all time, never-to-be repeated act. In the words of William Johnsson, the message of the book of Hebrews is that there are "not many means of purgation, but one par excellence (blood); not many applications of blood, but *one* application of *one* blood (Christ's); not inevitable oscillation from defilement to purgation and back again to defilement, but once-for-all breaking of the cycle."¹ Thus it is only in one sense we can say that atonement was "finished" on the cross. In Matthew's account of the agony of Gethsemane we have the words, "He began to be sorrowful and troubled," (Matt. 26:37, RSV), or as one translation puts it, "He began to be sorrowful and very homesick." But He did not go home at that point. The glory which He had with the Father in terms of equality with God was never resumed. He remained human and carried forward a ministry which did not end with the cross.

We may do well to remember MacLaren's observation in his famous *Expositions of Holy Scripture*. "Christian people," he wrote, "unduly limit the sphere of Christ's operations when they look back only to the Cross, and talk about a 'finished work' there, and forget that the finished work there is but the vestibule of the continuous work that is being done today."²

As human beings we have a genius for distortion. Vehicles which convey marvelous truths can be twisted ever so slightly and result in gross misconceptions and error. The death of Jesus on the cross expresses an identification of God with us, revealing the pain which sin has brought to the heart of God from all eternity.³ God was "in

Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself . . . " (2 Cor. 5:19).

Yet a slight twist in our thinking here can break up the unity which exists between the Father and the Son and suggest the heathen doctrine of appeasement, of averting the divine displeasure by the shedding of innocent blood. The emphasis then shifts from an act designed to bring about a change in us to an act which was designed to change the attitude of God. We must ever remember that the atonement "was not made to induce God to love those whom He otherwise hated; . . . it was made as a manifestation of the love which was already in God's heart."⁴

The term "substitutionary atonement" is held by orthodox Christianity, but it is fraught with some difficulty. He is punished in our place, we say. We may find it hard to see the justice of punishing the innocent for what the guilty did. We naturally ask, Why should punishing the innocent have anything to do with freeing the guilty? Is not guilt something that can be removed but not by a process of transferring it to someone else? In other words, if I have wronged someone, I should indeed feel guilty for doing what I did. The person wronged may forgive me, and then the guilt is removed, if I am willing to accept the forgiveness. Our concept of justice calls for the punishment of the guilty, not the punishment of the innocent.

Many of us still smart with what we assume to be righteous indignation when we recall the teacher who punished the entire class for the untoward behavior of one of the class members. Would it not be equally offensive to punish one class member for what the whole class did? When Jesus forgives us, we indeed think of Him as bearing our sins. But we may be going a bit far if we think of this as a transference of sins necessitating that Jesus suffer the same pangs of guilt as though He Himself had done the act.

In the light of such texts as 2 Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:13, conservative Christians have often thought of the cross as marking the point where guilt is *imputed* to Jesus, a view which can be helpful. But, must Jesus feel as though He Himself had been in the role of a wifebeater, or a mass murderer, or a struggling alcoholic or a spiritually proud and self-sufficient Pharisee? Perhaps the experience of Moses in identifying with the people of Israel and hence representing them comes closest to giving an insight into what Jesus felt in taking our guilt. ". . . if thou wilt forgive their sins—;" Moses pled, "and if not, blot me . . . out of thy book . . ." (Ex. 32:32). Jesus identified fully with us. He bears our sins (1 Peter 2:24), lifting the load from our shoulders, and carrying it Himself. Such an outpouring of love secures the universe, giving testimony to the destructiveness of sin and paving the way to an eternal oneness with God, which is what the atonement is all about.

Yet we must ever recognize that the atonement is not reducible to cold logic and rationality. We stand in awe before an unfathomable mystery. For the story of the Son of God who is the great Creator of the universe coming to die for us will be our science and our song through all eternity.

1. *Delilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1973, p. 432.

2. *Comments on the Gospel of John*, p. 275.

3. *Education*, p. 263.

4. *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 743.

Lift Up Jesus

TESTIMONY

Key text:

Hebrews 9:26-28

Our Atoning Sacrifice

Jesus was the majesty of heaven, the beloved commander of the angels, who delighted to do His pleasure. He was one with God, "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18), yet He thought it not a thing to be desired to be equal with God while man was lost in sin and misery. He stepped down from His throne, He left His crown and royal scepter, and clothed His divinity with humanity. He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, that man might be exalted to a seat with Him upon His throne. In Him we have a complete offering, and infinite sacrifice, a mighty Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In love He comes to reveal the Father, to reconcile man to God, to make him a new creature renewed after the image of Him who created him.

Jesus is our atoning sacrifice. We can make no atonement for ourselves; but by faith we can accept the atonement that has been made. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18, 19). It was through infinite sacrifice and inexpressible suffering that our redeemer placed redemption within our reach. He was in this world unhonored and unknown, that, through His wonderful condescension and humiliation, He might exalt man to receive eternal honors and immortal joys in the heavenly courts. During His thirty years of life on earth His heart was wrung with inconceivable anguish. The path from the manger to Calvary was shadowed by grief and sorrow. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, enduring such heartache as no human language can portray. He could have said in truth, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. 1:12). Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world. Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty. Innocent, yet offering Himself as a substitute for the transgressor. The guilt of every sin pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world's Redeemer. The evil thoughts, the evil words, the evil deeds of every son and daughter of Adam, called for retribution upon Himself; for He had become man's substitute. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

"Our divine substitute bared His soul to the sword of justice."

Voluntarily our divine Substitute bared His soul to the sword of justice, that we might not perish but have everlasting life. Said Christ, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17, 18). No man of earth or angel of heaven could have paid the penalty for sin. Jesus was the only one who could save rebellious man. In Him divinity and humanity were combined, and this was what gave efficiency to the offering on Calvary's cross. At the cross mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other.

As the sinner looks upon the Saviour dying on Calvary, and realizes that the sufferer is divine, he asks why this great sacrifice was made, and the cross points to the holy law of God which has been transgressed. The death of Christ is an unanswerable argument as to

the immutability and righteousness of the law. In prophesying of Christ, Isaiah says, "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable: (Isa. 42:21). The law has no power to pardon the evildoer. Its office is to point his defects, that he may realize his need of One who is mighty to save, his need of One who will become his substitute, his surety, his righteousness. Jesus meets the need of the sinner; for He has taken upon Him the sins of the transgressor. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). The Lord could have cut off the sinner, and utterly destroyed him; but the costlier plan was chosen. In His great love He provides hope for the hopeless, giving His only-begotten Son to bear the sins of the world. And since He has poured out all heaven in that one rich gift, He will withhold from man no needed aid that he may take the cup of salvation, and become an heir of God, joint heir with Christ.¹

The Content of the Loud Cry

The time is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. For it is the work of every one to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present Him to the world as revealed in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelations of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples and in the wonderful miracles wrought for the sons of men. Search the Scriptures; for they are they that testify of Him.

If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of His righteousness, which He imputes to the repentant sinner.²

"The costlier plan was chosen."

1. *Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 321-323 (*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 5, 1892).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 363 (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892).

Atonement: Redemption or Re-Education

by Emil Brunner

EVIDENCE

Key text:

Romans 3:21-26

“The sense of guilt means that our eyes have been opened to the intense seriousness of life.”

The death of Jesus is a sublime and noble martyrdom [according to moral influence theorists], one of the noblest that can be imagined. It is no less than this, but also it is no more. . . . In this type of thought the significance of the Passion and Death of Christ is wholly subjective. It is suggested that as man beholds this picture of the Man who gives Himself up so completely, with so much love and faithfulness to God, the divine love and faithfulness will be manifested to him. The meaning of Reconciliation is here misinterpreted. This is the subjective view: Man, quite wrongly, regards God as an enemy, as a Judge who wishes to punish him. At the Cross man becomes aware of his error; here the idea that God is love conquers the idea of His anger. Thus here the only gulf which separates man from God is illusory, namely, it is that which human error has placed between itself and God. Reconciliation simply means the removal of a religious error.

The truth is rather that between us and God there is an actual obstacle, which blocks the way like a great boulder. . . . This obstacle is sin, or, rather, guilt. For guilt is that element in sin by which it belongs unalterably to the past, and as this unalterable element determines the present destiny of each soul. Guilt means that our past—that which can never be made good—always constitutes one element in our present situation. Therefore we only conceive our life as a whole when we see it in this dark shadow of guilt. Thus the sense of guilt means that our eyes have been opened to the intense seriousness of life. The more profoundly serious is our view of life, the less life is broken up into isolated elements, and the more it is conceived as a whole, the more it is seen in the light of man's responsibility, that is, of guilt.

. . . In real forgiveness the gulf between God and man would indeed be spanned, but in such a way that in the very act of throwing this bridge over the abyss the depth and breadth of the gulf would become still more evident. Real forgiveness would be an event of such a nature that in the very act of removing the great boulder which blocks the path its weight would become still more evident. It would be a transaction of such a kind that *only* in it, in its actual achievement, could we become *certain* of the divine forgiveness. But this is what the New Testament means by reconciliation through the Cross of Jesus Christ. This is the event in which God makes known His holiness and His love simultaneously, in one event, in an absolute manner. We can, however, only perceive its full significance as a real act of forgiveness if we see that it is far more than a symbol, however impressive—one symbol among others—that it is *the* act of revelation, which, as an actual event, constitutes the basis of our faith in forgiveness. This is what is meant by reconciliation, if the word is taken in the Biblical objective sense.

Excerpted from Emil Brunner, *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith*, translated by Olive Wyon, pp. 435-450. Copyright © 1947, by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission of the Westminster Press.

March 9
Wednesday

Emil Brunner was an influential twentieth-century Swiss theologian.

How to Relate

to Atonement Theories

by C. S. Lewis

. . . Before I became a Christian I was under the impression that the first thing Christians had to believe was one particular theory as to what point of this [Christ's] dying was. According to that theory God wanted to punish men for having deserted and joined the Great Rebel, but Christ volunteered to be punished instead, and so God let us off. Now I admit that even this theory does not seem to me quite so immoral and so silly as it used to; but that is not the point I want to make. What I came to see later on was that neither this theory nor any other is Christianity. The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter. A good many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that it does work. I will tell you what I think it is like. All sensible people know that if you are tired and hungry a meal will do you good. But the modern theory of nourishment—all about vitamins and proteins—is a different thing. People ate their dinners and felt better long before the theory of vitamins was ever heard of: and if the theory of vitamins is some day abandoned they will go on eating their dinners just the same. Theories about Christ's death are not Christianity: They are explanations about how it works. Christians would not all agree as to how important these theories are. But I think they will all agree that the thing itself is infinitely more important than any explanations that theologians have produced. I think they would probably admit that no explanation will ever be quite adequate to the reality. . . .

On my view the theories are not themselves the thing you are asked to accept. . . . They are not really true in the way the formula is; they do not give you the real thing but only something more or less like it. They are only meant to help, and if they do not help you can drop them. . . . We believe that the death of Christ is just that point in history at which something absolutely unimaginable from outside shows through into our own world. And if we cannot picture even the atoms of which our own world is built, of course we are not going to be able to picture this. Indeed, if we found that we could fully understand it, that very fact would show it was not what it professes to be—the inconceivable, the uncreated, the thing from beyond nature, striking down into nature like lightning. . . .

We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed. Any theories we build up as to how Christ's death did all this are, in my view, quite secondary: mere plans or diagrams to be left alone if they do not help us, and, even if they do help us, not to be confused with the thing itself.

HOW TO

Key text:
Romans 5:1, 2

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), pp. 57-59.

C. S. Lewis was one of this century's leading Christian apologists.

March 10
Thursday

Reconciled By His Death

by Kurt D.
Davis

OPINION

Key text:
Hebrews
10:19-22

“Good men
freely forgive
and forget,
so why
can't a
good God do
the same?”

Many theologians say that Christ's death accomplished no more than His life. In other words, it only emphasized the measure of His love for God and man, rather than atoning for sins. They argue that by beholding this demonstration a man is convinced of God's love and fairness and hence is won to His service. But they also say that this vision of love is what actually reconciles us to God, rather than being reconciled to God by Christ's substitutionary death for us. The atonement changes our perception of God rather than our legal standing with Him.

This theory of the atonement (commonly called the moral influence theory) came about as a result of some of the problems involved in the traditional view. And, to be honest, we must admit the difficulty of some of the questions raised by critics of the “legal model” of the atonement. Consider these for example: 1) Is an omnipotent God of love bound by a law more authoritative than Himself which requires a cruel sacrifice to satisfy its requirements? 2) Can one really bear the punishment of another in moral issues? 3) Does punishment really rectify past wrong? 4) Good men freely forgive and forget, so why can't a good God do the same without demanding a bloody death in payment? These are sticky questions to be sure—questions that our symbolic, analogous salvation-vocabularies are quite inadequate to answer.

On the other hand, the moral influence theorists are not without their difficulties, also. For instance, they have a difficult time explaining the expiation/propitiation terminology of the “legal model” which so occupies the pages of the New Testament. Also, there is a basic flaw in one of their major suppositions. They assume that a revelation of God's character will reconcile men to God. Unfortunately history has not born this out. The law delivered at Sinai was a revelation of God's character, yet the Apostle Paul found it to be a source of alienation (see Rom. 7:7-14) since it showed his imperfection. As a revelation of God, Jesus showed the positive ramifications of that negative law. In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus pushed back the horizon of law keeping to its perfect ideal. In His life and teachings Jesus was a more complete revelation of God's character than was the law from Sinai.

Here is the point that causes the problem: With a more complete revelation—a clearer standard—why is man not *more* alienated? If Jesus did not in some way bear our sins, He would merely be another standard to aggravate the distance between God and man. If mere revelations of God's character brought reconciliation one would expect Sinai to have been a halfway point where wounds began to mend. But it is not pictured that way at all. It is pictured as a means of irritating wounds so that we will be driven to Christ. It follows then that since we are reconciled to God through Christ, it has to be because of a *real* atonement in a legal sense of the word.

It may be that our analogies and understanding are inadequate to completely untangle the implications of a legal atonement, but given the fact that we can now have unrestricted access to God, it would appear that there has been a change in our status with God since Christ—a change unaccounted for except by a legal justification.

1. Is there a sense in which the atonement was not finished at the cross (see Logos)? Explain why or why not.
2. Though both the Logos and Opinion articles point out problems with the traditional legal model of the atonement, most of this week's authors lean toward some kind of substitutionary atonement. Do you agree with this emphasis? If not, what might be said in favor of the so-called moral influence theory (see Evidence for a definition of the term)?

If you favor the legal model, how would you respond to these challenges referred to in the Opinion:

- a) Is an omnipotent God of love bound by a law more authoritative than Himself which requires a cruel sacrifice to satisfy its requirements?
 - b) Can one really bear the punishment of another in moral issues?
 - c) Does punishment rectify past wrong?
 - d) Why can't God forgive and forget, as good men would do?
3. What practical difference might it make whether you believe in the moral influence theory or the legal theory? What is your reaction to C. S. Lewis' argument that atonement theories don't really matter, it's the fact of the atonement that is crucial?
 4. In 1892 Ellen White wrote (see Testimony) that the message of justification by faith which originated at the 1888 General Conference, was the beginning of the loud cry just before Jesus comes. Obviously the message did not reach the culmination she expected. Is the righteousness by faith emphasis as crucial to eschatology now as it was then? Or is that concept basically settled now so that a different emphasis is needed to raise the loud cry today?
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Resurrection – The Dawn of a New Age



“ ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!’ ” (Luke 24:5, NIV).

Lesson 12, March 13-19

The Impossible Good News

by LaVonne Neff

It's hard for twentieth-century people to believe in resurrection. An organism dies, decays, and crumbles. No researcher has ever seen a dead body reverse the process. Yet it's hard for twentieth-century people to give up resurrection. We do not like to think that our ultimate purpose is to push up daisies. Some of us continue to believe because we have heard a story. Once a Man lived and died and rose again. His followers say He still lives. They say He is the door to eternity, to new life, to resurrection.

If a first-century pagan had heard about twentieth-century Christians, he might have said, "People will be gullible in two thousand years. We first-century people demand hard evidence. We know that people do not rise from the dead." Babies and soldiers died and did not come back. Nobody expected them to. Jesus' best friends did not recognize Him at first when He came back. Nobody had expected Him to.

Some Christians at Corinth did not think He had come back. They did not expect their dead friends to come back either. Other elements of the Christian faith they apparently valued—the call to self-sacrifice, maybe, or the communion of the saints, the high moral standards, the worship services, or even the myth of a dying and rising God. But the resurrection teaching they found incredible.

Some twentieth-century

Christians also find the resurrection teaching incredible. Not wanting to give up the benefits of their faith, they adapt the resurrection story to fit the twentieth-century mind. Christ's body did not rise, they say, but faith in Him rose in the hearts of the believers. Christianity is based on their proclamation, not on an event.

But without hope of resurrection, self-sacrifice soon seems pointless. A friend's death leads to despair. High standards appear naive. Worship centered on the body and blood of a risen Lord looks absurd. The comforting myth is swallowed by a monstrous reality, and death gives the final answer to the meaning of life. Christians who do not believe in resurrection, said Paul, "are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

The Christian church was built on an event reported by men and women who believed. In spite of the impossibility of resurrection, they had seen Jesus, talked with Him, eaten with Him, touched Him. Once convinced that He rose from the dead, they were willing to face shipwrecks, wild beasts, and prison terms to get the news out. "Christ is risen!" became the rallying cry of the church, "and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Resurrection is never such good news as when most of the world thinks it's impossible.

INTRODUCTION

What the Resurrection Assures Us

LOGOS

The resurrection of Jesus is the keystone of the entire New Testament proclamation of good news. Having seen the risen Lord for themselves, the disciples proclaimed with fearless joy that the crucified One was indeed God's Messiah. "You," they declared, "put him to death by nailing him on the cross, but God raised him from the dead freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:23, 24, NIV). If Jesus' story had ended with His body decaying in Joseph's tomb, He would have been just another false pretender to an elusive Messiahship, deluded fanatic who thought He was God. The resurrection makes credible those dramatic claims Jesus made for Himself. Because of it, we know for certain that He was the fulfillment of Israel's hope, the very Word of God manifest in human personhood.

One of the central themes of Jesus' teaching was that in His ministry, the kingdom of God promised by the OT prophets became a present, dynamic reality (see for example Mark 1:14, 15; Matt. 12:28). Yet, not all the kingdom promises were fulfilled by Jesus. Suffering, injustice, and death are as pervasive as ever. But the resurrection assures us that Jesus' kingdom promises do not constitute a chimeric, for Paul describes the Risen Christ as reigning *now*. "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25, NIV). Our hope that the kingdom Jesus inaugurated so long ago will finally be consummated one day is solidly based on the reality of His present reign.

The resurrection is also a means by which God reveals His incredible generosity toward us, for even while we were yet alienated from Him by sin, He made us participants by faith in Christ's resurrection and ascension. "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6, 7, NIV). In this present moment, still encumbered by the frailty, sinfulness, and mortality of human existence, our true selves are "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3, NIV). Every received spiritual blessing is guaranteed us because God graciously identifies us with the resurrected Saviour.

Christ's resurrection opened a new era of spiritual freedom and possibility. Paul tells us that we can know God's "incomparably great power . . . That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 1:19, 20, NIV). The same mighty power that freed Christ from the grave frees our lives from self-centeredness and meaninglessness. It empowers us not only in our struggle against personal sin, but in our struggle against social evil. Ronald Sider comments that "Nothing can more securely anchor a doggedly persistent commitment to the struggle for justice than the revolutionary regenerating presence of the Risen Jesus in one's life."¹

Finally, Christ's resurrection grounds our hope of being resurrected. ". . . Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20, NIV). Since the firstfruits have already been gathered, it is a certainty that there will be a full harvest. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (vs. 22)."

D. F. M.

1. Ronald J. Sider, "Resurrection and Liberation" (*College People*, May 1982), p. 42.

"I Am With You Always"

selected by David Slee

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 17:4-8;
20-24

Of Christ it is said, "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." We need to realize the truth of Christ's manhood in order to appreciate the truth of the above words. It was not make believe humanity that Christ took upon Himself. He took human nature and lived human nature. Christ worked not miracles on His own behalf.¹

There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are seraphim and cherubim. The angels circle around Him, but Christ waves them back. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His triumph in this antitype of Himself—the wave sheaf—those raised with Him, the representatives of the captive dead who shall come forth from their graves when the trump shall sound. He approached the Father, and if there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, if the Father rejoices over one with singing, let the imagination take in this scene. Christ says: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (John 17:24). And the voice of God is heard; justice is satisfied; Satan is vanquished. "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). The arms of the Father encircle the Son, and His voice is heard saying, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1:6).²

What a source of joy to the disciples to know that they had such a Friend in heaven to plead in their behalf! Through the visible ascension of Christ all their views and contemplation of heaven were changed. Their minds had formerly dwelt upon it as a region of unlimited space, tenanted by spirits without substance. Now heaven was connected with the thought of Jesus, whom they had loved and revered above all others, with whom they had conversed and journeyed, whom they had handled even in His resurrected body, who had spoken hope and comfort to their hearts, and who, while the words were upon His lips, had been taken up before their eyes, the tones of His voice coming back to them as a cloudy chariot of angels received Him: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."³

Christ ascended to heaven, bearing a sanctified, holy humanity with Him into the heavenly courts, and through the eternal ages He will bear it, as the One who has redeemed every human being in the city of God, the One who has pleaded before the Father, "I have graven upon the palms of my hands." The palms of His hands bear the marks of the wounds He received. If we are wounded and bruised, if we meet with difficulties that are hard to manage, let us remember how much Christ suffered for us. Let us sit together with our brethren in heavenly places in Christ. Let us bring heaven's blessing into our hearts.⁴

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1124.

2. *Selected Messages Book Two*, pp. 306, 307.

3. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1054.

4. *Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905.

David Slee is a chaplain at Hinsdale Sanitarium and Hospital.

March 15
Tuesday

Evidence for the Resurrection

by John T. Baldwin

EVIDENCE

Key text:

1 Corinthians

15:3-9

Briefly, what are the scriptural, historical, and experiential evidences for the resurrection of Jesus?

Biblical Evidence. Both testaments affirm the resurrection of Christ. The Psalms contain a reference to this event (cf. esp. John 20:9; Acts 2:31, 32 and Ps. 16:10). Old Testament apocalyptic literature also anticipates the resurrection of Christ, because the Son of Man, identified as Messiah the Prince, reigns after being cut off (see Dan. 7:8-14; 9:24-27). The reports of the empty tomb (cf., Luke 24:23; John 20:1-18) and the several different natural appearances of the corporeal Jesus (cf., Luke 24:39; John 20:7; 1 Cor. 15:6) constitute major New Testament evidences of the resurrection. The report of the Roman tomb guard (Matt. 28:4, 11-15) and the witness of the resurrected saints (Matt. 27:52, 53) add their weight in support of the reliability of the reports of the appearances (cf., Acts 1:3).

Historical Evidence. Wolfhart Pannenberg charts a new course (*contra* Bultmann, Moltmann, and Conzelmann *et al.*) in theological circles with his bold claim that "[t]here is no justification for affirming Jesus' resurrection as an event that really happened, if it is not to be affirmed as a historical event as such."¹ Six points suggested by Pannenberg for the historicity of the resurrection deserve serious consideration. First, the fact that the earliest Jewish polemics against the resurrection of Jesus do not dispute the notion that His grave became empty, speaks for the trustworthiness of the reports of the empty tomb.² Secondly, the report of Jesus' burial could hardly have been invented secondarily, because it "is tied to the name of Joseph of Arimathea."³ Thirdly, the appearance to the five hundred individuals (1 Cor. 15:6) cannot be a secondary construction because Paul "calls attention precisely here to the possibility of checking his assertion by saying that most of the five hundred are still alive."⁴ Fourthly, the "temporal distribution" between the appearances speaks against the theory of a "sort of chain reaction resulting from the first appearance to Peter."⁵ Fifthly, because the faith of the disciples could not have survived the crucifixion apart from the appearances, the Easter faith of the disciples is to be explained from the appearances and not the other way around. Thus, sixthly, Pannenberg concurs with J. Leipoldt who says that "[o]ne cannot doubt that the disciples were convinced that they had seen the resurrected Lord. Otherwise the origin of the community in Jerusalem and with it of the church becomes an enigma."⁶

"The final evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ lies in the personal experience of the believer."

Experiential Evidence. Jesus' gentle rebuke to the skeptical Thomas is appropriate here: "Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). It seems that the character of belief attested here includes not only a belief *that* such a person rose from the dead, but also belief *in* the resurrected One as Lord and Saviour. Clearly, if Christ is my living Lord today, He can no longer be in the tomb. Thus the final evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ lies in the personal spiritual experience of the individual believer in the risen Lord through the immediate power of the Holy Spirit. The classic words of a gospel chorus expresses this notion aptly: "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart."

1. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 99.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Life After the Resurrection

by Jana Ford-Harder

What does the resurrection mean for us each day? How does it make a difference in the way you and I live our lives?

If you were to think seriously about these questions for even a half hour, you could probably compile a list of ways in which your life does (or could) reflect the truth of the resurrection. To help you get started on that list, here are three possibilities.

1. The resurrection gives us optimism. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has triumphed over our enemies—fear, sorrow, evil, and sin—and that through Him, we share in the triumph. Though our lives may at time be filled with genuine unhappiness, we can have a bedrock certainty that “all things work together for good” (Rom. 8:28). The sense of cosmic perspective that the resurrection gives can calm us in time of turmoil and sorrow, and heighten our sense of joy when all is going well. In essence, the resurrection can provide a corrective to an undue preoccupation with the vagaries of daily life.

2. The resurrection removes fear of death. Since I have worked in a hospital, I’ve become acutely aware of the presence of death, a presence which can make itself felt at any moment to any one of us. The Christian’s response to death—either his or her own, or that of a loved one—is bound to be shaped by the knowledge that Christ has overcome death. Of course, death usually brings some fear and sorrow with it, even as other temporary human partings do, but the Christian has the assurance that death is not the ultimate victor, and that Satan’s devices, including death, cannot prevail.

3. The resurrection proves that Christ is our Brother. Since Christ arose from the dead still in human form, He and His Father have made a radical commitment to the human race. Theologically, there appears to be no reason why Christ could not have resumed His wholly spiritual nature after being fully incarnate on earth and dying a real death. But He apparently *chose* to remain one with us in His very body. By doing so, He will always be able to understand us and be part of us. The writer of Hebrews certainly pointed out Christ’s link to us as he said, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb.4:15, 16). As we face the difficulties and advantages that human life gives us, we can be assured that the resurrected Christ faces them with us.

HOW TO

Key text:
1 Corinthians
15:51-56

Resurrection and Justification

by George Eldon Ladd

OPINION

Key text:
Romans 4:25

Paul says that if Christ is not risen "you are still in your sins." How can this be? Is it not the death of Christ by which atonement is made for our sins? Is not His death efficacious without His resurrection?

Paul says not. Perhaps the best way to expound Paul's thoughts is by dealing with a rather difficult verse. In Romans 4:25, Paul says that Jesus "was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." The present author has puzzled long over the meaning of this verse. Justification by faith was one of the most important doctrinal themes in Paul's theological thought. Justification means "acquittal." It presupposes the final judgment when all men will stand before God to be judged. There will be a two-fold issue from this judgment: acquitted, or condemned. . . .

Thus far Paul was at one with Judaism which believed in the acquittal of the righteous in the day of judgment. But here the similarity ceases. The Jews believed that men were righteous because of their good works in obedience to the Law. Paul declares that all are sinners, but because of the death of Christ, sinners who believe in Christ will be justified—indeed, they have already been justified. Paul teaches justification as a present reality grounded in the death of Christ, to be received by sinners by faith (Rom. 3:21-31).

If their justification is a redemptive work wrought by Christ on the cross, how can Paul say that Christ was raised for our justification? What does resurrection have to do with it?

The answer to this question is that justification is *both* a past event in history and a future eschatological event. Is it not the hearers of the Law who will be acquitted but the doers of the Law who *will be* justified (Rom. 2:13). The temporal orientation of the words, "by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19), is the future judgment when God will pronounce the verdict of righteousness upon the many. The "*hope of righteousness*" for which we wait is the judicial pronouncement of righteousness, that is, of acquittal in the day of judgment.

"The decree of acquittal which was pronounced over us at the cross must be confirmed by God's verdict on the day of judgment."

This is why Paul says that even believers, who *have been* justified, must appear before the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10), which is also the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). The decree of acquittal which was pronounced over us at the cross must be confirmed by God's verdict in the day of judgment. . . . Christ speaks in the believer's defence, recalling that in His suffering and death on the cross, justification was achieved. No voice can prevail over the voice of Christ who defends. But it is not only Jesus who died, but Christ Jesus who was raised from the dead and *who lives to make intercession* to God for the believers. Indeed, we are justified by His resurrection: for if the justification of the cross is a proleptic announcement of the eschatological acquittal, but if Christ has not been raised to defend His people in the eschatological judgment, then the whole doctrine of justification is a figment of the imagination.

Excerpted from George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975) pp. 147, 148.

March 18
Friday

112

George Eldon Ladd is one of this century's leading evangelical New Testament scholars.

1. What do you think LaVonne Neff (Introduction) means in saying that resurrection "is never such good news as when most of the world thinks it's impossible"? If the idea of resurrection were easily believed, what would be the impact of the Christian gospel on the world?
2. Identify at least two ways the resurrection of Jesus impacts on one's personal lifestyle.
3. Do you think Ronald Sider is correct in commenting (see Logos) that the resurrection anchors a "doggedly persistent commitment to the struggle for justice"? How might the "revolutionary regenerating presence of the Risen Jesus" affect our attitude toward concerns like social justice, peacemaking and ecology?
4. Do you think the resurrection of Jesus can be proven or is it simply a matter of faith? If you were asked by a nonbeliever to explain why you believe in the resurrection, what are the two most important reasons you would give?
5. Both the Testimony and How To articles allude to the fact Jesus was resurrected in glorified *human* form, and that He will bear this humanity throughout eternity. What do you find significant about this fact?
6. George Eldon Ladd (Opinion), on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:17 and Romans 4:25, relates the resurrection to the ultimate justification received by believers at the final judgment. Do you find this a satisfactory explanation of Paul's statement that Jesus was "raised" for our justification? Do you see any implications here for the Adventist concept of a pre-advent judgment?

All-sufficient Redeemer



"... Christ is all, and is in all (Colossians 3:11, NIV).

by Tom Robbins

The Light of Sorban

"I seek the Great White Light of Sorban," declared Aldine the Younger to the maroon-robed stranger he had just met in the dusty road.

"And why do you seek this White Light?" the stranger asked from beneath his hooded cloak.

"Because it will give me the courage and strength to face any challenge," replied Aldine.

"And what do you think the Great White Light of Sorban looks like?" said the stranger.

"I have heard that it is a ball," Aldine explained, "like crystal, but also like a cloud, and it shimmers with a bright white glow, with transparent wisps of all the colors of the rainbows flickering within. Can you direct me to it?"

"Yes, I can," the stranger said as he pulled a shiny object from one of the many folds of his robe, "but the road is difficult and you must cross through the Swamp of Despair. Take this blade with you. It will cut the vines that may impede your way. Also, whenever you come to a fork in the path, take the right fork except when it is wide and grassy. If the right fork is wide and grassy, take the left fork. You will find the entrance to the Swamp of Despair down this path. The path soon became murky and narrow. Aldine found himself climbing along and over logs and skipping from rock to rock to keep from falling into the deep peat bogs, the bubbling black waters and the steamy stinking sulfur pits that lay on every side of the path. At one point he faced a wall of gigantic vines the diameter of his arms and

became very discouraged. He was certain that his knife would be useless against such large vines. In anger, he struck at one of the vines and prepared to turn back, but, much to his surprise, the blade sliced right through. Aldine cut his way through and soon the path emerged into a meadow.

At the top of a little knoll, Aldine again met the hooded stranger sitting on a rock. This time the stranger told him that he would have to go through the Maze of Caves and gave him a rectangle of glass that, when rubbed, gave off a yellow light. With a fearful spirit, Aldine went into the dark, damp caves. First the way was rough and craggy, then it became wet, slippery and steep. Several times, Aldine thought he could go no further, but he used the light and managed to make it through the maze. When he emerged, he was greeted again by the stranger.

Aldine now was angry. Obviously the stranger had known better, faster, safer routes around the Swamp of Despair and the Maze of Caves.

"I have had it with you!" Aldine cried. "Twice you have directed me through dangerous passages, leading me to believe that I would find at the end of each the Light of Sorban. And each time I have only been greeted by you."

"What you say is true," said the stranger, "but your understanding is incomplete. You see, I am the Great White Light of Sorban. Have I not given you the courage and strength to face any challenge?"

INTRODUCTION

Tom Robbins is an assistant professor of English, Kettering College of Medical Arts.

☐ March 20
Sunday

Another Word in the Alphabet Soup?

LOGOS

Cruden's Concordance lists 135 names of Jesus Christ: "Adam, Advocate, Alpha and Omega, Amen . . .", and the list goes on. Looking further through the alphabet soup of words for Jesus, a student of the Bible may seemingly arrive at an all-inclusive term for Christ only to see another expression float by. While the name(s) we choose to select may not themselves be significant, they provide a basis for reaction to Him and the imagery to visualize Him in various roles. Though giving evidence for the existence of each of Christ's numerous titles, the Bible brings certain of the roles to prominence, giving an answer to the question of what "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11) really means.

1. **Sacrifice and mediator.** "It is through faith that all of you are God's sons in union with Christ Jesus. You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28, TEV). Christ's sacrifice makes salvation possible and bridges the sociological gaps between all believers.

As "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5) presents His death as worthy to atone for the sin of repentant believers. Like His sacrifice, His mediation "is all, and in all," complete and plenteous. Nothing less is sufficient, nothing more is necessary. Able to be "in all," the offer of salvation is not limited to a certain race, those of a particular income, or sex. All may be justified as a result of faith (Romans 3:22-26).

2. **The vine.** "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Perhaps no symbol is more fitting for Jesus than the vine. It expresses our dependency on Him and the necessity for spiritual oneness of aims, motives, and desires with Him. He supplies strength and wisdom through that same spiritual vine, and separation from the vine prevents the figurative fruits of the spirit from developing. Paul wished the Ephesians such a close relationship with Christ: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; . . . that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:16-19). Faith grows as, through communication with Him, the validity of Christ's sacrifice and mediation are realized. Faith then goes beyond the daily experience to give strength to finish our earthly work (Matthew 28:20) and even face life-threatening tests (Daniel 3).

3. **The Lamb.** "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:22). From the standpoint of Revelation, Christ appears predominantly as the Lamb. Mentioned twenty-seven times in the book, the Lamb represents the finished sacrifice of Christ as the crucified One. This Lamb, slain from the world's foundation (Rev. 13:8), is to be forever the focus of love, life, and study. He was, is and will continue to be our All in All.

T. K. S.

by Melanie M. Wuchenich

Mediation For All

The sacrifice which Christ made on the cross reveals the great love He has for His children. Because Christ was willing to become Man and give His life for us. He is man's Redeemer, shedding His blood so that man might again be restored to God's image.

"In the beginning, man was created in the image of God. He was in perfect harmony with the nature and law of God; the principles of righteousness were written upon his heart. But sin alienated him from his Maker. He no longer reflected the divine image. . . . But 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,' that man might be reconciled to God. Through the merits of Christ he can be restored to harmony with His Maker."¹ Christ the Reconciler restores man to God.

Christ's death is an act of reconciliation, and now in heaven, He acts as Mediator. "By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the forerunner is for us entered.' [Hebrews 6:20]. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God."²

Not only does Christ's life and death pay for man's sin, but it again restores to man the unity and brotherhood which sin seeks to destroy. "Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. . . . He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. . . . He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul."³

"The religion of Christ uplifts the receiver to a higher plane of thought and action, while at the same time it presents the whole human race as alike the objects of the love of God, being purchased by the sacrifice of His son. At the feet of Jesus, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, meet together, with no thought of caste or worldly pre-eminence. All earthly distinctions are forgotten as we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced. The self-denial, the condescension, the infinite compassion of Him who was highly exalted in heaven, puts to shame human pride, self-esteem, and social caste. Pure, undefiled religion manifests its heaven-born principles in bringing into oneness all who are sanctified through the truth. All meet as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon Him who has redeemed them to God."⁴

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 15:5

"His gift of love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain."

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 467.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 489.
3. *Gospel Workers*, p. 46.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

Melanie M. Wuchenich was an English instructor at Kettering College of Medical Arts at the time of this writing.

March 22
Tuesday

The Way of Reconciliation

by Robert G. Wilson

EVIDENCE

Key text:

Colossians 1:
15-23

"A new answer thunders forth amidst nihilism, hedonism and meaninglessness."

Modern secular thinking sees the whole life as relative. Absolutes have vanished and everything that claims universal validity is looked at with suspicion. A logical consequence of this view of life is a futility attending questions of human origin, meaning and destiny. In spite of discoveries of order, dependability and stability in the natural world, secular man does not extend that purposefulness to human existence. A consequence arising out of this vacuum is "nihilism." Amidst the prosperity of contemporary Western culture millions who have everything despair in emptiness. Sophisticated modern man has concluded there is no purpose beyond elusive "happiness." What is life for? It is for nothing beyond his brief attempt to enjoy himself.

Christianity announces to the world an absolute view of human origin, meaning and destiny, and it finds its focus in the person of the God-man, Jesus Christ. He is the answer to our origin, we are His purposeful creatures. Human existence takes on a broad new meaning which Martin Niemöller calls the "way of reconciliation." A new answer thunders forth amidst human nihilism, hedonism and meaninglessness. As Niemöller says, "Life is not meaningless and not in vain . . . Reconciliation points out that man is not left to himself, and life's fulfillment cannot be found or achieved in individual solitude and preoccupation with self."¹

As Paul so graphically points out in Colossians 1, human existence is ultimately and thoroughly purposeful and has its nucleus in the existence of Jesus Christ. Only from the revelation of God and man in Christ can we seize the real meaning of what mankind is designed for and capable of. Niemöller reflects, "For nearly two thousand years the Christian message has proclaimed Jesus as this longed-for liberator and restorer of humanity. . . . He won his disciples over by his truly brotherly and human concern for them so that they accepted the personal relationship that he offered. As they received his Spirit, their natural inhumanity and self concern changed to trust in his Father, whom they now accepted as their own Father. It changed to concern, love, obedience, and solidarity with their fellow beings. There, for them, was the answer to the question: What is life for?"²

By virtue of his creative and redemptive vitality the Christ is truly the center of God's creation. He is the model of complete personhood. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Nobody can live and nothing can exist apart from Him. His life, death, resurrection and eternal ministry to uphold life forever underscores the absolute value that human life finds its fulfillment in trusting relationship. Man is loved by his Creator and finds his eternal meaning in responding in love to God as his Father and to his fellow man as his brother. Christ as Creator provided bountifully for human potential, and as Redeemer He has provided abundantly for the full reclamation of fallen man to His vast potential in the image of God. "God is love" expresses the nature of the ultimate reality undergirding the universe which was displayed in Christ as the norm of life. This becomes to the Christian the statement of his own destiny. This gives ultimate meaning to his existence and the continuance of God's creation in the age to come.

1. Martin Niemöller. "Christ for the World." *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, Vol. 10. (Clyde E. Fant, Jr. and William M. Pinson, Jr. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1971), p. 252.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

☐ March 23
Wednesday

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Robert G. Wilson is Assistant Professor of Religion and Ethics at Kettering College of Medical Arts, and College Chaplain.

How To Get Rid of Your Rabbits' Feet

by Helmut Thielicke

A few years ago, after lecturing on some religious subject, I was to be taken back home by car. The driver of the automobile knew that I had given that lecture, and before we had traveled a mile he felt obligated to say, "Doctor, you're a theologian, aren't you? I'm sorry to say that I myself don't believe in anything."

I responded, "You didn't even have to tell me that. I noticed it as soon as I got in your car." The honest driver was obviously so floored by this answer that I momentarily feared for his steering; he turned toward me abruptly and asked, slightly disconcerted, "How did you figure that out?"

"Well," I replied, "when I saw your various good luck charms and talismans dangling there, I knew that you didn't believe in God and therefore were dragging yourself around with a corresponding amount of anxiety."

"To be frank with you," he stated, "I don't quite get the connection." Yet the whole matter seemed to be rather intriguing to him.

"I'll be glad to tell you my idea about the connection," I answered "If you don't believe in God, you no longer know about the fatherly backdrop for the world. Everything—your personal life as well as all of world history—dissolves into the workings of blind forces and meaningless accidents. And so the world itself becomes sinister to you. It becomes downright hostile. Every tree along this boulevard is your secret enemy, because it could dent your radiator. And every truck is an evil and incalculable monster that could come too close to your scalp. So you see, you need to protect yourself against this sinister world that you mistrust. Therefore the good luck charms."

My driver was a serious and reflective man. It especially impressed me that, at first, he said nothing. Clearly, conflicting thoughts were battling within him. He then disclosed to me that he had, in fact, worked out an entire protective system of superstition and had built it up around his life like a strategic belt of fortifications. He confessed with comforting openness that it all really expressed a sort of defensive posture against the uncertainties and hard knocks of life. "There is the competitive crunch," he said, "and the uncontrollable influences on my growing children. There are threats to health, and the many other things that make a person uneasy."

"Do you really think, then," asked the man after a period of silence, "that the Christian experiences the world differently? Is the Christian free from worry? How about you, for example, don't you worry?"

That was really a question of conscience, and I dared not present myself as better than I was.

"Of course, I know worry as well as you do."

"Well," he observed, "it is comforting, frankly, that you aren't any better off." He ceremoniously took a deep breath. "But in general," he continued, "Christians always act as though they were slightly special. Such hypocrisy was always irritating to me." That started him talking for quite a while. He bubbled over the graphic and unpleasant instances which he had experienced.

"Wait a minute," I interjected at that point, "I believe you have missed my point. We Christians are indeed a little different—or sup-

HOW TO
Key Text:
John 16:33

"Everything . . . dissolves into the workings of blind forces and meaningless accidents."

Helmut Thielicke is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Hamburg, West Germany.

March 24
Thursday

posed to be, at any rate."

"Aha, I thought so!" he crowed, but immediately tried to pull back tactfully: "Well, of course, otherwise there wouldn't be any point to all that nonsense if something better didn't come out of it."

I didn't dare let him win so cheap a victory. "Look," I said, "earlier in your life you surely learned Jesus' statement, 'In the world you have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'" (John 16:33, RSV).

"I did learn it, but frankly, I never understood it."

I then gave my driver a little exposition of those words. It took many miles and a lot of conversation, which I will summarize here in a few sentences.

Of course, if you are a Christian, you have problems in this world, exactly as other folks do. However, you deal with these worries differently. You need not repress them nor superstitiously exorcise them. You have with you him who had overcome this worrisome world with the serpent on its horizon.

Then what is the significance of having overcome the world through this One? It means, first, that he is with us. I know no better summary of the gospel than the fact that he is *with* us: throughout his whole life he was to be found with the sick, the lonely, and the guilty. And finally he even met his end in our human death—not triumphantly, by the way, as though it didn't matter to him, but so totally that he called out in despair to his Father because he no longer could see his face.

When we Christians say that this One has overcome guilt and death, we often make that confession far too lightly. Frequently we say (and think), "After all, he was almighty. He simply called off the angel of death; he didn't let him 'get to him.'" "

On the contrary, Jesus felt the pain of a refugee's life, of loneliness, and of death, and he lay in exactly the same grave in which we all shall one day lie. He has also been imprisoned; he too has fallen into the hands of men. He too has been treated meanly. He has indeed let all that "get to him." Otherwise he would never be our companion and our brother.

I want to put that in an image. We are encircled by enemy powers. We are somewhat like soldiers in wartime who are surrounded. He does not call off those besieging powers by virtue of some sort of omnipotence; he lands in the middle with us. He takes the worry and the provocation of the besieged upon himself and breaks the blockade from within. Note that—from within. In temptation he faced sin exactly as we do; the devil tried to hoodwink and hypnotize him too. But he took care of that. He walked down the dark passage of death, but he crashed through the final wall; he blew away the stone which covered his grave. Thus he takes with him those who walk at his side and leads them through the loneliness of their last hour. He does not spare us from death. But he goes along. He doesn't spare us from the world and its sinister ends either. But he is with us during the siege.

We wander through this remarkable and incalculable life as though it were a valley of shadows. We have no promise that we will be lead around it, but we have someone beside us.

**"He takes
the worry
and the
provocation
of the
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and breaks
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from
within."**

Excerpted from Helmut Thielicke, *Being a Christian When the Chips Are Down*, H. George Anderson, trans., pp. 75-79. English translation copyright © 1979 by Fortress Press. Used by permission of Fortress Press and William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., London.

Ideas Have Consequences

by Winton H. Beaven

When all is said and done the only real evidence anyone has that we are Christians is how we treat other people. Someone said a long time ago, "Ideas have consequences," and, indeed, they do. What we believe is of primary importance only insofar as it affects our behavior—and our behavior towards others demonstrates clearly whether or not we love God.

Seventh-day Adventists in the last forty years have gone through a cycle. Forty years ago "religion by works" was taught in school and at camp-meeting, though never blatantly labelled as such. I heard it and saw it. But a decade or so ago we rediscovered "justification by faith." The work of Christ on earth and in heaven was given greater prominence and behavioral structures were somewhat relaxed. A new freedom and even some religious exuberance appeared. The "Indwelling Spirit" was recognized as never before in my life time.

What is the result?

Are we more loving, more kind, more accepting of others and their failings? Has racism declined and class consciousness lessened? Are we more concerned for the welfare of our neighbor? Has "petty politics" withered away? Do we look upon our leaders, secular and religious, with compassion, realizing that they are poor, weak mortals like ourselves? Are we quick to acknowledge our own mistakes and slow to criticize others? Do we recognize that all who claim the name of Christ are our brothers or sisters in a special way, regardless of demoninational labels? Do we instinctively move forward to help when a need is presented?

If our actions correspond to the positives of the foregoing, praise the Lord! Then, indeed, "Christ dwells in our hearts" (Eph. 2:17) and the "mind of Christ" (Phil 2:5) directs our actions. Then, the acceptance of "Christ, Our Righteousness" as mediator and reconciler is demonstrated in our lives.

If not—what then?

OPINION

Key text:
Philippians 2:5

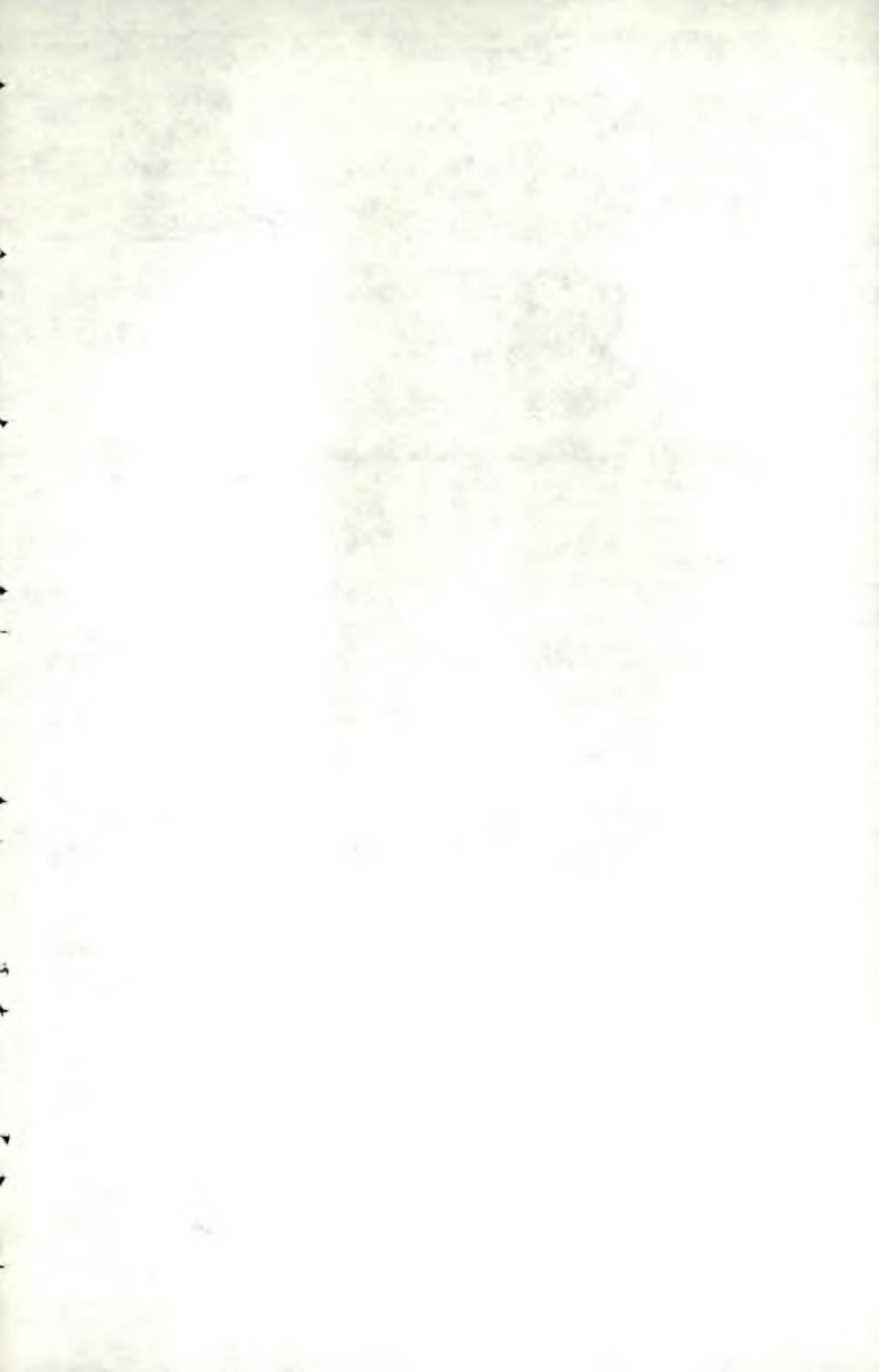
"What we believe is of primary importance only insofar as it affects our behavior"

REACT
Lesson 13

1. What do you think this week's Introduction is trying to communicate about the relationship between God and man? Why was Aldine led through the Swamp of Despair and the Maze of Caves instead of immediately being given the Light of Sorban?
2. Compare the Introduction and How To articles. Are similar points being made in the two articles? Are there any contrasts?

Do you find Thielicke's concept of Christ being with us in difficulty rather than helping us avoid it satisfactorily? Does this make Him something less than an *all-sufficient* redeemer?

3. Which biblical symbol or term describing Christ do you find most meaningful? Explain.
4. Do you think the church's renewed emphasis on faith and love during the past decade has resulted in greater love, acceptance and practical Christianity in the denominations? If so, what indications lead you to this conclusion? If not, what's the answer? Should we go back to a greater stress on law?



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