

American Union Newsletter

Volume 42, No. 9 – September 2025

Special Sabbath School Offering for Education

Sabbath, October 4, 2025

Elder Larry Watts
American Union Vice President
Norman Park, Georgia

Dear members and friends of the American Union, Greetings! "And ... the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David...." Matthew 21:15.

"So in these days children's voices will be raised in giving the last warning to a perishing world. By them God's message will be made known, and His saving health to all nations." –Manuscript 19, 1900.

To assist in fulfilling this prophecy, the American Union delegates passed several resolutions regarding the tithe envelope and offerings establishing specific dates for special offerings for education. Recently, it was decided that the offerings for Norman College and Orion Christian Academy be more prominently listed on the tithes and offerings envelope. The footnote on the envelope also indicates those offerings and others as areas in which such investment can be made. The delegates, along with the American Union Board, also decided to gather two Sabbath school offerings for education each year—the first Sabbath in April, for Nor-

man College, and the first Sabbath in October, for Orion Christian Academy.

In honor of our dear Sister Sandra Nelson, who passed away last March at the age of 52, after more than 30 years as a pioneer in Christian education, the Sabbath school offering to be gathered on October 4, 2025, will go to Orion Christian Academy in her name. (Normally, half of the offering gathered in the Sabbath school each week goes to the American Union for non-missionary expenses; and the other half is kept in the local church to meet non-missionary expenses, such as literature, rent, utilities, maintenance, etc.) While Orion Christian Academy has an international student body, this offering is for the support of its activities within the American Union.

The goal to establish a middle school on the Norman College campus in Norman Park, Georgia, which will be known as Orion Academy, is coming closer to reality. The leading brethren ask for

your prayers and generous support for this project. May all glory be to God for it, and may it lead to the salvation of souls. The education of children is one of the highest purposes of missionary activity.

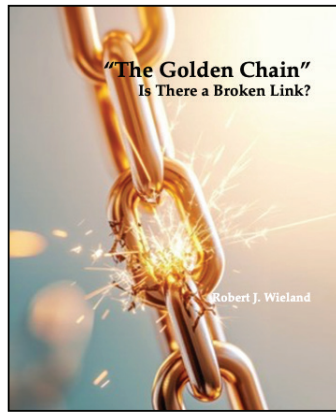
"Let all join heartily to do the utmost of their ability to support the school that is now to be established; for in the hands of God it may be the means of educating workers to shed forth the light of truth upon the people. Who will be on the Lord's side? Who will now see the work to be done, and do it?" –(Supplement to *The Bible Echo*, September 1, 1892) *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 211.



The Humanity of Christ

Introduction *The Golden Chain*

By Robert Wieland (1916-2011)
Summarized by Elder Larry Watts



"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1.

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God." —Selected Messages, book 1, p. 244.

"The Immaculate Conception ... contradicts the true humanity of Jesus and overthrows the good news of salvation: In fact, if Mary is outside the 'camp' where humanity is held captive by the evil one, then the Child which she miraculously conceived will Himself also be born outside this camp: and then neither He nor His work will have relevance for men." —Jean-Jacques von Allmen (1917-1994), Swiss Reformed theologian.

J.J. von Allmen's statement referenced a well-known decision of the early church fathers: Any doctrine that denies Jesus' full human nature also undermines the entire salvific mission of Christ.

Stated another way, any person or church that denies that Jesus was not both fully human and fully divine is not of God. That He was divine is not ambiguous in either the Bible or the writings of the Spirit of prophecy. His perfect sinlessness is also assumed by almost everyone. But the question of His humanity is not so settled in some minds. Did He take the humanity of Adam before the Fall, after the Fall, or somewhere in between? Some believe that Sister Ellen G. White's writings on this latter point are confusing and contradictory.

Is it possible that the real reason for the controversy centers in the question of the perfectibility of man—is man perfectible? All debate about the nature of Christ is actually about the nature of man. If in any way Christ was not fully human, the thinking goes, then man has an excuse for not overcoming every sin and besetment. "We will not be perfected till Jesus comes"—this is the repeated mantra. It is only at the second coming that we will have the glorious body that He had at His resurrection and therefore be free from temptation and sinning. But if He was fully human and was tempted in all points as we are—internally and externally—then we have no excuse. If He overcame as a full-blooded human being who had all of the same hormones and inclinations that we have, and the help of divine resources that we have available to us, we can overcome as He did. Just as He yielded to His Father's will in everything, we too may yield our wills to Jesus in everything and come off more than conquerors, as He did. In Galatians 2:17, Paul stated the question like this: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" To his own rhetorical question Paul emphatically answered, "God forbid." The implication is clear. Jesus is not the minister of sin, and God's grace is greater than all our sin and sins. If only the issue were left there!

This is not a new issue. Some 40 years ago, an Adventist minister, Robert J. Wieland, took up the subject of the humanity of Christ in a book titled *The Golden Chain*. What follows is a summary of the introduction to that book, which spells out some of the major reasons for the controversy. You can obtain the complete dissertation from Religious Liberty Publishing Assn. if you would like to know more. The introduction that follows is very interesting and provides encouragement to walk closer to the Lord in this testing time. —Elder Larry Watts

Why this subject is important

Jesus our Saviour! How could anything be more important than seeing Him as He truly is? His name is "Immanuel," which means, "God with us." He was and is both fully God and fully man. "The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study." —Selected Messages, book 1, p. 244.

"For years,... there is a broken link which has kept us from reaching hearts; this link is supplied by presenting the love and mercy of God." —March 3, 1891, Council of Presidents meeting, March 3, 1891.

Any failure to "perceive Christ clearly" is a broken link in "the chain that has been let down from the throne of God [which] is long enough to reach to the lowest depths." —Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 119.

"One defective link makes a chain worthless." —Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 158.

Sister White sensed that the clearest, most beautiful presentation of Christ as "God with us" since apostolic times was found in the 1888 message of Christ Our Righteousness. She identified Elders A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner 105 times (during the decade after 1888) as "the Lord's messengers," and 10 times as His "special" or "delegated" messengers. Surely she was trying to tell us something. It would seem to be the most natural thing now to give a sympathetic hearing to that message.

But there are objections, because at the very heart of the 1888 message is a concept that some sincere scholars see as a stumbling block. They are rightly anxious to preserve inviolate the truth of Christ's perfect sinlessness. The 1888 messengers had no doubts about Christ's perfect holiness and righteousness, but they maintained that His character was developed in a human nature identical to ours—a fallen nature. Furthermore, they maintained that when God's people truly understand and appreciate this "righteousness by faith" they will be enabled to "overcome even as [Christ] overcame," and thus prepare for His glorious return.

The problem of the objectors is four-fold: (1) fear that this concept will somehow worm its way in to undermine Christ's perfect sinlessness; (2) fear that "orthodox" theologians in the popular

churches will ridicule us if we embrace it; (3) fear that this is "Pharisaic perfectionism;" and (4) perplexity regarding apparently contradictory statements in the Bible and in Sister White's writings.

If such a contradiction seems apparent, the solution must be closer study. Complete confidence in divine inspiration is at stake. Hence, this subject assumes towering importance.

There is no desire here to pry into deep mystery, but there is a reason for more study. "Those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deuteronomy 29:29. There are divine mysteries in regard to the incarnation of Christ that we may never fully understand, but there are also truths revealed that are essential to understand now if we are ever to "overcome even as [Christ] overcame."

Sister White spoke frequently of the 1888 message as "the message of Christ's righteousness." Never did she speak of it as the message of His "holiness." Christ was "holy" at His birth (Luke 1:35), but He was "righteous" at His death. Romans 5:18. There is a vast distinction between these two concepts. Implicit in her phrase "Christ's righteousness" is the idea that Christ "overcame" and condemned sin in our fallen, sinful flesh, which He "took." The following was written concerning this 1888 message of Christ's righteousness:

"The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. If he can control minds so that doubt and unbelief and darkness shall compose the experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation. *Unless divine power is brought into the experience of the people of God, false theories and erroneous ideas will take minds captive, Christ and His righteousness will be dropped out of the experience of many, and their faith will be without power or life....*

"The Lord can do little for His people, because of their limited faith. The ministers have not presented Christ in His fulness to the people, either in the churches or in new fields, and the people have not had an intelligent faith. They have not been instructed as they should have been that Christ is unto them salvation and righteousness.... A bright light shines upon our pathway

today [she was writing in the context of the 1888 message], and it leads to increased faith in Jesus. We must receive every ray of light." —*Review and Herald*, September 3, 1889, emphasis added. Somehow this powerful statement failed to get into the four-volume set of her 1888 Materials.

A "mystery" in the New Testament is not something that God wants to hide from man, but a truth that He wants to reveal. The 1888 view of Christ's righteousness "in the likeness of sinful flesh" was an important part of the "rich floods of light" that shone on the pathway. The message that Sister White endorsed as "most precious" was not merely emotional feeling; it was objective truth, a "secret" which God obviously wanted to make known.

We expect that Sister White wrote simply and clearly within her own context. Furthermore, we would not dare to charge God with giving us a Bible that is not understandable or that is self-contradictory. If we do not permit our own ideas to intrude into our reading of inspired writings, I believe we will encounter no problems or confusion.

As to the embarrassment that we fear might come from the ridicule of "orthodox" evangelicals if we publicly embrace that "most precious message" that God gave to His people, I believe we may be repeating the unbelief of the ten spies at Kadesh-Barnea. They were sinfully afraid of "giants" who were powerless before the arm of the Lord. The popular churches desperately need to have their minds stirred by a bold proclamation of Bible truth. And, especially in this area of Christ's righteousness, there is a tremendous vacuum waiting to be filled. Millions in the popular churches want to be led to the true Christ and find Him "nigh at hand," not "afar off." Sister White's enthusiastic endorsement of Jones and Waggoner's presentation of Christ and His righteousness at South Lancaster, Massachusetts, on January 11, 1889, is on record: "We felt the necessity of presenting Christ as a Saviour who was not afar off, but nigh at hand." —*Review and Herald*, March 5, 1889. That statement alone lifts this subject out of the realm of sterile theology into practical gospel living.

Besides, there is not the slightest need for anyone to be embarrassed. The Lord has already prepared the way. Well-respected individual non-Adventist theologians today have come to believe basically the same truth as the

1888 idea about Jesus. The British theologian Harry Johnson wrote a doctoral thesis at London University, *The Humanity of the Saviour*, in which he convincingly demonstrated that respected theologians through the centuries have embraced a view of Christ's nature identical to that which was the heart of the 1888 message. Johnson cited the following: Gregory of Nyssa (AD 330-395), Felix of Urgel (f. 792), Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680), Peter Poiret (1646-1719), Christian Fende, Johann Konrad Dippel (1673-1734), Gottfried Menken (1768-1831), Hermann Friedrich Kohlburgge (1803-1875), Edward Irving (1792-1834), Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788-1870), Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810-1917), and McCloud Campbell (1800-1872). There was also J. Gamier, who was contemporary with Jones and Waggoner.

Speaking of those who believed that Jesus took fallen man's nature, John-



son commented: In their view it was perfectly possible to hold side by side His sinlessness and His assumption of "fallen human nature," and they do not appear to be guilty of illogically combining incompatibles. If this doctrine has been rejected for this reason, it has been rejected only because it has been misunderstood (op. cit., p. 193).

It is something like the frequent situation during past centuries when Christian Sabbath keepers were persecuted as Jews simply because they kept the seventh day. The idea that the sinless Christ assumed fallen human nature

has been even more unpopular than the seventh-day Sabbath, yet it rests on the same Biblical foundation.

There is no "perfectionism" in the 1888 message. It is simply the message of "the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." There is not a trace of extremism in it, though its contemporary opponents mistakenly charged it with being extremism. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 92, 97. Sister White strongly defended it.

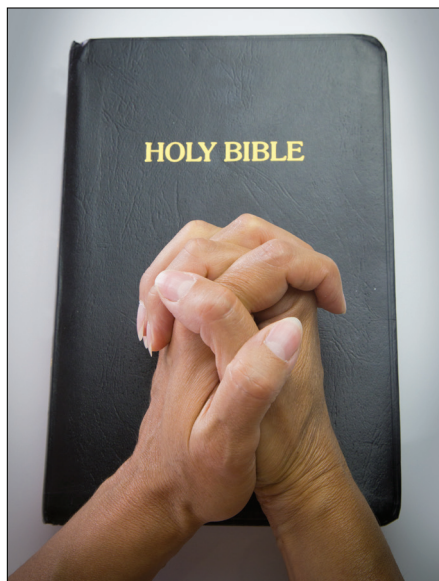
The 1888 message, which "the Lord in His great mercy sent" to Seventh-day Adventists, is the spiritual food for which many in the church are famishing. It is unfortunately too true that "Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them." The "most precious message" has indeed "in a great degree [been] kept away from the world." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 91; *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 234-235, 1896.

The natural, unconverted human heart resents a call to Christlike character. But the message is all Good News, and it is all by faith. It is simply the gospel standard set by Christ, for which He ministers much more abounding grace to make all of its imperatives become joyous enablings.

Although there is no "perfectionism" in the 1888 message, there is indeed a call to holy living. In February 1894, Sister White published a booklet as No. 118 of the "Bible Students' Library," entitled *Christ Tempted As We Are*. Her message supported Jones and Waggoner's concept of Christ's taking man's fallen, sinful nature, yet living therein a life of perfect righteousness.

She began by quoting Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:15: "It behoved Him [Christ] to be made like unto His brethren;" "He is able to succour them that are tempted," "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." She then refuted the popular "Christian" idea that "we cannot overcome as He overcame."

This is not true. Christ knows the sinner's trials; He knows his temptations. He took upon Himself man's nature. Christ was actually tempted, not only in the wilderness, but all through His life. In all points He was tempted as we are; and because He successfully resisted temptation in every form, He gave us a perfect example. Jesus can enable



us to resist Satan's temptations.... Jesus fought all our battles.... The Christian's strongest temptations will come from within; for he must battle against the inclinations of the natural heart. The Lord knows our weaknesses.... The hand of the Infinite is stretched over the battlements of heaven to grasp your hand in its embrace. The mighty Helper is nigh to help the most erring, the most sinful and despairing. —pp. 3-12.

Good news! It is our purpose to realize how good it is!

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

"He who does this work must put into it his whole heart; for it is a work that requires all there is of a man. He who does it as a work that is done for wages, will make an utter failure....

"It is not necessary to bring everything that needs to be corrected before the manager. When you see a worker in error, go to him, and talk with him kindly and tenderly, showing a sincere desire for his welfare. In nine cases out of ten your efforts will be successful. You will save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." —(Letter 67, 1902) *Medical Ministry*, p. 181.

"The mighty shaking has commenced, and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and sacrifice for God and His cause. The angel said, 'Think ye that any will be compelled to sacrifice? No, no. It must be a free will offering. It will take all to buy the field.' I cried to God to spare His people, some of whom were fainting and dying.

"I saw that those who have strength to labor with their hands, and help sustain the cause, were as accountable for that strength, as others were for their property.

"Then I saw that the judgments of Almighty God were speedily coming. I begged of the angel to speak in his language to the people. Said he, 'All the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai would not move those who will not be moved by the plain truths of the word of God, neither would an angel's message awake them.'

"I then beheld the beauty and loveliness of Jesus. His robe was whiter than the whitest white. No language can describe His glory and exalted loveliness. All, all who keep the commandments of God, will enter in through the gates into the city, and have right to the tree of life, and ever be in the presence of the lovely Jesus, whose countenance shines brighter than the sun at noon-day." —*To the "Little Flock,"* pp. 31-32.

The *American Union Newsletter* is published monthly by the International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, American Union. It is complimentary for members and friends and carries items of interest submitted by believers. We reserve the right to make changes as necessary and to refuse to print certain items. To submit news or articles, send your item in an email to info@sda1888.org.

4243 US Highway 319 North, Norman Park, Georgia 31771. Email: info@sda1888.org / Website: sda1888.org.