

**Jesus Christ's Humanity in the Contexts of the Pre-Fall and Post-Fall  
Natures of Humanity: A Comparative and Critical Evaluative Study of the  
Views of Jack Sequeira, Millard J Erickson and Norman R Gulley**

by

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## DECLARATION

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Exact wording of the title of the thesis appearing on the electronic copy submitted for examination: *Jesus Christ's Humanity in the Contexts of the Pre-fall and Post-fall Natures of Humanity: A Comparative and Critical Evaluative Study of the Views of Jack Sequeira, Millard J. Erickson and Norman R. Gulley*

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that the University has granted ethical clearance for this study.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

30<sup>th</sup> December, 2019

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EMMANUEL MWALE

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DATE

## SUMMARY

Before God created human beings, He devised a plan to save them in case they sinned. In this plan, the second Person of the Godhead would become human. Thus, the incarnation of the second Person of the Godhead was solely for the purpose of saving fallen, sinful human beings. There would have been no incarnation if human beings had not sinned. Thus, the nature of the mission that necessitated the incarnation determined what kind of human nature Jesus was to assume.

It was sin that necessitated the incarnation – sin as a tendency and sin as an act of disobedience. In His incarnational life and later through His death on Calvary's cross, Jesus needed to deal with this dual problem of sin. In order for Him to achieve this, He needed to identify Himself with the fallen humanity in such a way that He would qualify to be the substitute for the fallen humanity. In His role as fallen humanity's substitute, He would die vicariously and at the same time have sin as a tendency rendered impotent. Jesus needed to assume a human nature that would qualify Him to be an understanding and sympathetic High Priest. He needed to assume a nature that would qualify Him to be an example in overcoming temptation and suffering.

Thus, in this study, after comparing and critically evaluating the Christological views of Jack Sequeira, Millard J. Erickson and Norman R. Gulley, I propose that Jesus assumed a *unique post-fall (postlapsarian)* human nature. He assumed the very nature that all human beings since humankind's fall have, with its tendency or leaning towards sin. However, unlike other human beings, who are sinners by nature and need a saviour, Jesus was not a sinner. I contend that Jesus was unique because, first and foremost, He was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit and was filled with the Holy Spirit throughout His earthly life. Second; He was the God-Man; and third, He lived a sinless life.

This study contributes to literature on Christology, and uniquely to Christological dialogue between Evangelical and Seventh-day Adventist theologians.

## KEY TERMS

Adoptionism; Alleles; Anhypostatic Christology; Anthropotokos; Alternative Christology; Apollinarianism; Aphotodocetism; Arianism; Augustinian model; Autosomal chromosomes; Autosomal inheritance; Born-again Christology; Chalcedonian Creed; Christology, Christology from above; Christology from below; Christotokos; Chromosomes; Chromosomal abnormalities; Cloning; Co-dominance; Communicatio idiomatum; Complementary base pairing; Cri-du-chat syndrome; Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA); Diploid cell; Docetism; Dominant gene; Down syndrome; Dynamic incarnation; Dynamic Monarchianism; Eastern Orthodox Christology; Ebionitism; Embryogenesis; Eutychianism; Evangelical Christology; Existential Christology; Functional Christology; Genes; Gene mutation; Gene expression; Genome; Genotype; Gnosticism; Hamartiology; Haploid cell; Heterozygous; 'History of Jesus' Christology; Homoiousios Theology; Homoiousios Theology; Homozygous; Human cloning; Immaculate Conception; incarnation; incarnational life; Inheritance; Karyotype; Kenoticism; Klinefelter syndrome; Logos-Flesh Christology; Meiosis; Mitosis; Modalistic Monarchianism; Monarchianism; Monophysitism; Mutation; Nestorianism; Nicene Creed; One-Nature Christology; Ontological Christology; Organogenesis; Patripassianism; Phenotype; Polygenic inheritance; Post-lapsarian view/model; Prelapsarian view/model; Recessive gene; Roman Catholic Christology; Sabellianism; Seventh-day Adventist Christology; Sex chromosomes; Sex-linked inheritance; Sex-linked traits; Speculative Christology; Socinianism; Soteriology; Theotokos; Turner syndrome; Two-natures Christology; Unique post-fall Christology; Virginal Conception.



## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CNS: Central Nervous System  
DNA: Deoxyribonucleic Acid  
ETS: Evangelical Theological Society  
NT: New Testament  
OT: Old Testament  
SCNT: Somatic Cell Transfer  
SDA: Seventh-day Adventist

## CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

### **Adoptionism**

A Christological position which regards Jesus Christ to have been a mere human being, but who was adopted by God, the Father, either at His baptism or resurrection.

### **Alleles**

Paired genes responsible for a particular characteristic.

### **Anhypostatic Christology**

A Christological view that the humanity of Jesus was impersonal and had no independent subsistence; the man Jesus Christ had no subsistence apart from the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity.

### **Anthropotokos**

'Human-bearing'. It is believed that the virgin Mary bore the human Jesus and not God.

### **Alternative or unique Christology**

A Christological model which regards Jesus to have had neither a pre-fall nor post-fall human nature, but elements of both.

### **Apollinarianism**

Apollinaris' teaching that the human mind in Jesus Christ was replaced by the divine mind, assuring that He would be sinless.

### **Aphartodocetism**

A type of Monarchianism in which it was taught that, because Jesus Christ was divine, He experienced no change through His incarnation and His birth through the virgin Mary.

**Arianism**

The teaching of Arius which says that Jesus Christ had a beginning and hence was not God in the sense of God, the Father.

**Augustinian model**

An approach to Christology in which faith precedes but does not remain permanently independent of reason. The starting point is the kerygma, the belief and preaching of the church about Jesus – faith and historical reason are combined in an intertwined, mutually dependent, simultaneously progressing fashion.

**Autosomal chromosomes**

The first 22 pairs of chromosomes.

**Autosomal inheritance**

A form of inheritance that is related to autosomal chromosomes.

**Born-again Christology**

A Christological model which regards the human nature of Jesus to have been like that of a born-again Christian.

**Chalcedonian Creed**

A Christological statement of belief formulated at Chalcedon in 451 AD.

**Christology**

The systematic study of Jesus – His Person and His work.

**Christology from above**

The approach to Christology that the Christologists of the first centuries of the Christian Church took, whose thrust is that Christian faith springs only out of the witness to Jesus of the preached message and written word of the Scriptures.

**Christology from below**

An approach to Christology which attempts to construct a full Christology from the man Jesus of Nazareth, including His deity.

**Christotokos**

‘Christ-bearing’. It is believed that the virgin Mary bore Jesus.

**Chromosomes**

A collection of highly visible, compact, sausage-shaped structures when a body cell prepares to divide.

**Chromosomal abnormalities**

Abnormalities resulting from a fault during meiosis where a gamete is produced, carrying abnormal chromosomes – too many or too few, abnormally shaped, or with missing segments.

**Cloning**

A process by which a duplicate of an organism is produced.

**Co-dominance**

This is a case of gene expression where neither gene is dominant but each gene expresses itself equally with the other.

***Communicatio idiomatum***

‘The interchange of properties’. When this term was applied to Jesus Christ, it was taught that in Him there was an interchange of properties – the divine with the human and the human with the divine – and hence Jesus Christ was one Person.

**Complementary base pairing**

The pairing of each base along one strand of DNA with a base on the other strand in a precise and predictable way.

**Cri-du-chat syndrome**

The characteristic meowing cry of an affected child, caused when part of chromosome 5 is missing.

**Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)**

A double-stranded molecule, made of two chains of nucleotides.

**Diploid cell**

A cell which has 23 pairs of chromosomes.

**Docetism**

From the Greek verb *δοκέω*, which can be translated with 'to seem' or 'to appear' – Jesus was not really human; He just appeared to be human.

**Dominant gene**

A gene that expresses itself over the other gene.

**Down syndrome**

A disorder in which there are three copies of chromosome 21 (trisomy), which means that an extra chromosome is present, caused by failure of chromosomes to separate normally during meiosis.

**Dynamic incarnation**

A Christological view that the incarnation was God's power being actively present within the Person of Jesus, instead of that His presence in the divine-human Jesus was a personal hypostatic union between the second Person of the Trinity and an individual being, called Jesus of Nazareth.

**Dynamic Monarchianism**

The term 'dynamic' is derived from the Greek term *dunamis*, which can be translated with 'power'. Dynamic Monarchianism is therefore a teaching that God's presence

was in Jesus in such a powerful way that Jesus was different from any other human being, but He was never God – only close to being God.

### **Eastern Orthodox Christology**

The Christology of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In terms of Jesus Christ's human nature, the general teaching is that He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature in order to deify fallen humanity.

### **Ebionitism**

A teaching of a Jewish sect called Ebionites – 'the poor ones', that there can only be one God – therefore Jesus Christ could not be God as well.

### **Embryogenesis**

The process of progressing from a single cell through the period of establishing organ primordia, which covers the first eight weeks of pregnancy.

### **Eutychianism**

A Christological theory which posits that Jesus had two natures before the incarnation and only one nature afterwards.

### **Evangelical Christology**

The general Christology of the body of believers collectively referred to as Evangelicals. In terms of Jesus Christ's human nature, the general teaching is that He assumed a pre-fall spiritual nature and a post-fall physical nature.

### **Existential Christology**

The approach to Christology in which the focus is on Jesus' present impact on the believer's life.

**Functional Christology**

The type of Christology which focuses on the meaning and significance of the mission and work of Jesus Christ.

**Gene**

A portion of DNA that determines a characteristic, such as skin colour.

**Gene expression**

The degree to which a gene goes through transcription and translation to show itself as an observable feature of an organism.

**Gene mutation**

An inheritance alteration in the normal genetic makeup of a cell.

**Genetics**

The study of genes, how genes produce characteristics and how the characteristics are inherited.

**Genome**

A set of all the genes necessary to specify an organism's complete list of characteristics.

**Genotype**

A listing of the genes present in an organism.

**Gnosticism**

A teaching that salvation is not through a saviour, but through knowledge: *Gnosis* is the enlightenment or saving knowledge.

**Hamartiology**

The systematic study of the concept of sin.

**Haploid cell**

A cell which has only 23 chromosomes.

**Heterozygous**

Two different forms of a particular gene are said to be heterozygous.

**'History of Jesus' Christology**

An approach to Christology in which researchers seek to go behind the Gospel narratives and strip them of what they think were just the early church accretions which, in their view, hide the genuine historical Jesus the Gospels are supposed to reveal.

**Homoiousios Theology**

A theological view that God, the Son, was made of *similar* (same sort of) substance as God, the Father.

**Homoousios Theology**

A theological view that God, the Son, was of the *same* substance with God, the Father.

**Homozygous**

Two identical forms of a particular gene are said to be homozygous.

**Human cloning**

A process by which a duplicate of a human being is produced.

**Immaculate conception**

A Roman Catholic Christological view that the virgin Mary was conceived without sin in her mother's womb; since she was sinless, she did not transmit sin in nature to her Son, Jesus Christ.



**incarnation**

Derived from two Latin words, *in* (in) and *caro* or *carnis* (flesh) or, in reference to Jesus, 'becoming flesh'.

**incarnational life**

The life of humility and selflessness that Jesus Christ lived as a human being until His death on Calvary's cross. He was subordinate to His Father throughout His earthly life.

**Inheritance**

The process by which an offspring receives characteristics from its parents.

**Karyotype**

The complete set of chromosomes from a cell.

**Kenoticism**

A Christological view that the incarnation was God's act in which the second Person of the Godhead exchanged His divine attributes for human characteristics.

**Klinefelter syndrome**

A condition in which the karyotype is XXY, and the affected individual is male, with 47 chromosomes instead of 46.

**Logos-Flesh Christology**

A Christological view that the Word of God took a human body in order to save fallen, sinful human beings, so that having shared our human birth, He might make us partakers of His divine and spiritual nature.

**Meiosis**

Cell division which takes place in reproductive cells.

**Mitochondrial abnormalities**

Abnormalities resulting from defects in mitochondrial DNA.

**Mitosis**

Cell division which takes place in non-reproductive cells.

**Modalistic Monarchianism**

A teaching that Jesus was basically divine and not human; the one who suffered was not a human being, but the Father Himself.

**Monarchianism**

A teaching that only God, the Father, is sovereign – there is no such thing as a Triune God.

**Monophysitism**

A teaching that Jesus Christ had only one nature – the divine nature in Him transformed the human, making Him fully divine, therefore not human.

**Nestorianism**

A Christian sect that originated in Asia Minor and Syria, stressing the independence of the divine and human natures of Jesus and, in effect, suggesting that they are two persons loosely united.

**Nicene Creed**

A Christological statement of belief formulated at Nicaea in 325 AD.

**One-Nature Christology**

A Christological position which states that Jesus Christ only had one nature.

**Ontological Christology**

The approach to Christology, which emphasises the 'being' and 'essence' of the Person of Jesus Christ, and not necessarily His work.

**Organogenesis**

The process of progressing from a single cell through the period of establishing organ primordia, which covers the first eight weeks of pregnancy.

**Patripassianism**

A teaching that the one who suffered was not a human being in the Person of Jesus, but the Father Himself.

**Phenotype**

The way each combination of alleles expresses itself.

**Polygenic inheritance**

A form of inheritance where characteristics are determined by the interaction of genes at several different loci (on different chromosomes or at different places on a single chromosome).

**Postlapsarian view/model**

A Christological view/model which regards Jesus Christ as having taken on both His divine nature and our fallen, sinful human nature, without cultivated tendencies or propensities towards sin.

**Prelapsarian view/model**

A Christological view/model which regards Jesus Christ as having assumed a pre-fall human nature.

**Recessive gene**

A gene that does not express itself in the presence of another gene which is dominant.

### **Roman Catholic Christology**

The Christology of the Roman Catholic Church. In terms of Jesus Christ's human nature, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ assumed a pre-fall nature through the immaculate conception.

### **Sabellianism**

The Christological view of Sabellius, which regards Jesus Christ to have been one God who manifested Himself in different forms successively, but not simultaneously.

### **Seventh-day Adventist Christology**

The Christology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In terms of Jesus Christ's specific human nature, the SDA Church has allowed a plurality of views.

### **Sex chromosomes**

Pair 23 comprising the X and Y chromosomes, which determine the sex of an individual.

### **Sex-linked inheritance**

A form of inheritance which involves sex-linked traits.

### **Sex-linked traits**

Traits coded for on the section of the X chromosome that has no corresponding material on the Y chromosome.

### **Speculative Christology**

The approach to the Christological problem in which various forms of idealism become the loci where the infinite and finite merge.

### **Socinianism**

A teaching of Faustus Socinus that Jesus Christ did not become God until after His resurrection. He was therefore not divine throughout His earthly life.

**Soteriology**

The systematic study of the doctrine of salvation.

**Theotokos**

'God-bearing'. The virgin Mary is believed to have given birth to God.

**Turner syndrome**

An abnormality associated with having only one sex chromosome, an X, as well as 22 normal pairs of autosomes.

**Two-natures Christology**

A Christological view which states that Jesus Christ had two natures (*physeis*) in one person (*prosopon*).

**Unique post-fall Christology**

A Christological model which regards Jesus to have had a unique post-fall human nature.

**Virginal conception**

A unique, singular and unrepeatable conception which took place in the womb of the virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## ABBREVIATIONS OF BIBLICAL BOOKS

<b>Book</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Book</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
Genesis	Gen	Nahum	Nah
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zeph
Numbers	Num	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Deut	Zechariah	Zech
Joshua	Josh	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Judg	Matthew	Matt
Ruth	Ruth	Mark	Mark
1 Samuel	1 Sam	Luke	Luke
2 Samuel	2 Sam	John	John
1 Kings	1 Kin	Acts	Acts
2 Kings	2 Kin	Romans	Rom
1 Chronicles	1 Chr	1 Corinthians	1 Cor
2 Chronicles	2 Chr	2 Corinthians	2 Cor
Ezra	Ezra	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Neh	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Esth	Philippians	Phil
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1 Thess
Proverbs	Prov	2 Thessalonians	2 Thess
Ecclesiastes	Eccl	1 Timothy	1 Tim
Song of Songs	Song	2 Timothy	2 Tim
Isaiah	Is	Titus	Titus
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Philem
Lamentations	Lam	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Ezek	James	James
Daniel	Dan	1 Peter	1 Pet
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2 Pet
Joel	Joel	1 John	1 John
Amos	Amos	2 John	2 John
Obadiah	Obad	3 John	3 John
Jonah	Jon	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations and references have been taken from the Remnant Study Bible and New King James Version (NKJV).

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If Millard J. Erickson had not shared his view of the incarnation, I would probably have not thought of doing this study. I therefore sincerely thank him for sharing his view in his *Christian Theology* (Erickson 2013).

I thank the University of South Africa for giving me the opportunity to study for this PhD without entering a lecture room.

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# CERTIFICATE OF THE EDITOR

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to  
Prof. J.M. Wood  
for being such a wonderful supervisor  
both at Master's and PhD levels

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION: THE FOCAL POINT OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Orientation

A survey of the history of the Christian Church reveals that the subject of Christology has been at the centre of many theological disputes (Zurcher 1999:21). During the first five centuries, theologians debated the subject of the nature of Jesus from an ontological perspective. In those centuries, church and state worked together. Therefore, politicians manoeuvred their way into the debates and even influenced some of the positions that were taken. Some theologians were excommunicated for refusing to accept popular positions. The church was divided between East and West. It is important to note that the Western church has, since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, accepted the normative teaching of the great councils of the patristic age, which were Nicaea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD), Ephesus (431 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD). The church has called these councils 'ecumenical' councils, because they represented the consensus of the whole church at the time (Hill 2006:98-99).

The Eastern Church held another three councils, which they regarded as equally important, making the councils seven in all. However, the Western church has never accepted these three councils as on equal footing with the first four. Generally, the church has regarded Nicaea (325 AD) to be a landmark council, being the first official church council, and it has also given great importance to Chalcedon (451 AD), being the last council of the united church.

It is important to reiterate that Christological debates did not end with Chalcedon (451 AD). However, the (Western) church has not given significance to the other Christological councils held after Chalcedon (451 AD). The Reformation divided the church into the many denominations that we currently have. The 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century European and American revivals saw many denominations formed. This meant that the classical churches could no longer monopolise theological discussions.

Today the main church groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Protestant Churches. The Anglican Church, that originated from the Roman Catholic Church, has within its ranks those who view themselves as Evangelical Christians. Then, we have those denominations that have distinctly identified themselves as Evangelical. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, while viewing itself as a Restorationist denomination, and not generally being accepted by other Evangelical denominations, has nonetheless identified itself as an Evangelical denomination.

This plurality of denominations makes any attempt to study the subject of the nature of Jesus a difficult one. In my opinion, if there ever is a theological topic that is difficult to study, it is the mystery of the incarnation. This is because the various denominations tend to influence the positions their adherents take. Theologians who decide to study the Bible on their own are generally thought to be rebellious and heretical and they are sometimes subjected to humiliation before they are excommunicated. This took place in the first five centuries of the Christian Church. The Roman Catholic Church has creedal statements, which all the faithful of that denomination are expected to uphold. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has fundamental beliefs that define what Adventists believe. While these beliefs are not creedal in nature, the church through committees has sometimes gone ahead to explain in detail what these fundamental beliefs actually mean. It is when the church explains in detail its fundamental beliefs, that independent studies become a challenge, for individual students of the Bible may be hindered by the fact that respected theologians have already given their views on a particular subject, which the church has by default embraced.

As I will show later, I see a gap in Christology that I believe this study can fill. It is in the area of the incarnation. I must reiterate that it is a complex subject, but I believe that the subject is worth studying. The incarnation is in my view, a topic that should receive attention even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and by 21<sup>st</sup>-century Christologists. Barth (1966:66) has argued affirmatively about Christology, that all knowledge of God is centred in it, at least all knowledge of God from the Christian perspective. This thought is echoed by Webster

(1984:1) when he asserts that 'Christology has always been the heart and centre of Christianity'.

According to Cullmann (1963:3), the field of Christology comprises Jesus Christ's Person and work. Christology refers to that study that focuses on the 'doctrines about Christ' (Hill 2006:533). When systematic theologians speak about the doctrines about Jesus, they particularly refer either to Jesus' Person (who He was) or His work (what He did, also known as atonement). I must add that Christology deals with the aspects of the nature of Jesus before His incarnation (His divinity without added humanity) as well as His nature after the incarnation (His new existence as the God-Man). It involves the incarnation itself. It is important, therefore, that I orient myself to the incarnation, for this thesis focuses on this indispensable area of Christology.

Adams (1994:56) asserts: 'The incarnation is the key doctrine of Christianity, the central doctrine of the Christian faith'. This thought is shared by Heppenstall (1977:21, 25), who argues: 'If one does not believe in the incarnation, then it is impossible to understand what the Christian faith stands for, [because] the substance of our faith lies in what Christ was and what He did, not merely in what He taught'. The English term 'incarnation' comes from two Latin terms, *in* (in) and *caro* or *carnis* (flesh). It can therefore be argued that 'incarnation' literally means 'in flesh' or, in reference to Jesus, 'becoming flesh' (Adams 1994:56). It has been stated that the incarnation involved God's act in which He took to Himself the nature of humanity (Grudem 2015:543).

Generally, most contemporary Christian scholars believe that Jesus Christ is God, although there are some (such as those of the Jehovah's Witness persuasion) who reject His divinity. It must be noted, nevertheless, that the 'deity of Christ sits at the pinnacle of controversy and belief concerning the Christian faith' (Erickson 2013:623). In Erickson's view, 'our faith rests on Jesus's actually being God in human flesh, and not simply an extraordinary human' (Erickson 2013:624). While recognising the fact that the deity of Jesus is at the centre of theological controversies, I wish to state on the outset that it is

not the focus of this study. I will discuss it in the historical chapter of this study, but it does not form part of the research. This study focuses on Jesus Christ's human nature.

There does not seem to be much controversy on whether or not Jesus Christ was a human being. The controversy seems to be on what kind of humanity He assumed. As Webster (1984:48) observes: 'The essential [Christological] question is this – did Jesus begin life in the incarnation exactly in the same state as all men relevant to the sin problem or was there any difference?' Knight (1987:134) echoes this thought when he observes that the point of controversy in Christology focuses on whether Jesus Christ was born with a moral nature exactly like ours; that is, with all its sinful tendencies, or whether He entered this world with a moral nature of the pre-fallen Adam. This is where the controversy lies. This seems to be true in most Christologies I have surveyed. It is partly because of this controversy among Christologists regarding the humanity of Jesus that I have thought of doing this study.

It is interesting, however, that the topic of Jesus Christ's human nature does not, in some ways, arouse the same attention and controversy as His divinity. Jesus Christ's humanity is on first glance something of a self-evident matter. This explains why it did not receive the close and extensive attention paid to His divinity, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reason for this is that what is not disputed, tends not to be discussed. However, it must be noted that historically, the topic of Jesus Christ's humanity has at least played an equal important role in theological dialogue compared to His divinity (Erickson 2013:644).

In this study, I have assumed, on the basis of Erickson's assertion, that the topic of the humanity of Jesus Christ has not aroused much debate and controversy in the Baptist church, for if the case had been different, Erickson would have made mention of it, since he is a Baptist. His assertion, nevertheless, holds true for the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church only for a period of about a 100 years (1852-1952) in which, reportedly, Adventists spoke with one voice on the nature of Jesus Christ's humanity (Larson 1986:iii). However, the years after 1952 witnessed a lot of debate and controversy over Jesus Christ's humanity in the SDA Church. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, which Erickson suggests

did not witness a controversy over Jesus Christ's human nature, was on the other hand, in the SDA Church, a time of much debate and controversy. The reason for this is probably because earlier, Adventist beliefs had not been brought to the scrutiny of the 'microscopic eye' of other Christian denominations. When Adventist scholars had conversations with scholars of other Christian persuasions, they began to critically evaluate their long-held view of Jesus Christ's human nature, which, reportedly, was basically that He had taken upon Himself the post-fall nature of Adam (Zurcher 1999:17-18). That the post-fall view was held by most Adventists in the early history of the SDA Church, is confirmed by Sequeira (1996:111).

It will be noted, nevertheless, that Erickson's observation to some extent holds true for the SDA Church as well. There has been no serious debate as to the fact of Christ's being human, for Adventists are generally in agreement that Jesus was a real human being. As Adams (1994:58) rightly asserts: 'According to my own observation, most (if not all) Adventists accept fully the fact of Christ's humanity'. As I have already noted, the controversies in the SDA Church have had to do with Jesus Christ's specific human nature assumed at the incarnation. These controversies have continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To appreciate the Christological controversies in the SDA Church, it is important to briefly review the past.

### **1.1.1 Brief History of SDA Christological Controversies**

A controversial book was published in 1957, in which the post-fall view of Jesus Christ's human nature was replaced with an alternative view. This book is believed to have been written by some SDA leaders, Bible teachers and editors. It resulted from 18 conferences held between SDA and Evangelical scholars during 1955 and 1956 (Webster 1984:31). These scholars included from the SDA group, L. Edwin Froom, W.E. Read, T.E. Unruh, and Roy Allan Anderson, and from the Evangelical side, Donald Grey Barnhouse and Walter R. Martin (Adams 1994:44). Webster (1984:31) observes that this book was well-received by non-Adventist scholars and indicated that Adventists have a lot in common with the rest of the Christian world.

It has been observed that the issue leading to the publication of the controversial book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (1957) began in January 1955, when a statement appeared in the editorial of a leading evangelical periodical, declaring that the SDA Church ‘disparages the Person and work of Christ’, in teaching that Jesus in His humanity ‘partook of our sinful, fallen nature’ (Zurcher 1999:155). The point of view of Schuyler English, editor of the periodical, was that Jesus did not partake of our fallen nature (Froom 1971:469). Froom wrote to English, noting that the latter had been mistaken as to the Adventist position on Jesus’ human nature (cf. Zurcher 1999:156). He wrote: ‘The old Colcord minority-view note in *Bible Readings* – contending for an inherent sinful, fallen nature for Jesus – had years before been expunged because of its error’ (Froom 1971:469). The correspondence closed with English admitting that he had been mistaken. He thus issued a correction in the periodical on the subject. Months later he published an article by Walter R. Martin, a Baptist theologian, who, after a seven-year study of Adventists, had concluded, as reported by Froom: ‘To charge the majority of Adventists today with holding these heretical views is *unfair, inaccurate, and decidedly unchristian*’ (Froom 1971:473; original emphasis).

Froom’s assertions were not left unchecked. Other Adventist theologians wrote against the new assertion that Jesus had assumed a sinless human nature. This ignited a controversy that has remained unresolved to this very day. We therefore have at least four different views of Jesus Christ’s human nature in the SDA Church (Gulley 2012:432-433): 1) There are scholars such as Sequeira and others who teach that Jesus Christ took upon His divine nature, the nature of humanity after humanity fell into sin (Sequeira 2009:74); 2) other scholars within the SDA Church teach that Jesus Christ took the nature of humanity before humanity fell into sin (Weber 1994:73); 3) scholars such as Davis suggest that ‘when we read that Jesus was in all respects like His brethren we can understand that He had a nature like born-again people’ (Davis 1979:31); and 4) Gulley, on the other hand, is of the view that Jesus Christ’s human nature was neither that of pre-fall nor that of post-fall humanity (Gulley 2012:434). This is the Christological mix in which I have been nurtured. It explains why I would want to undertake a study of this nature. This leads to my motivation for selecting three representative Christologists.



### **1.1.2 Motivation for Selecting Three Representative Christologists**

Sequeira, an Adventist Christologist, will represent in this study all theologians who hold the view that Jesus Christ assumed the post-fall nature of humanity. I could also select another scholar, but Sequeira's views have impacted on my theological thinking in such a way that I always want to examine his works in light of Scripture. Furthermore, Sequeira is viewed by some Adventist scholars as a theologian who goes to extremes in his study of any theological issue. In my view, however, the significance of Sequeira's post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus lies in the fact that he always presents it in the context of hamartiology and soteriology. Added to this, his view of the humanity of Jesus is quite unique. Apart from that, he links Jesus Christ's humanity to the in-Jesus Christ motif, which is a very important theological concept.

The pre-fall view held by Adventist scholars such as Weber is the same as that held by Erickson. As such, I have, instead of studying an Adventist scholar who holds this view, decided to study a Baptist. Studying a Baptist theologian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is very significant to me and to Christology in general, because at least one of the Evangelicals, who held talks with some Adventist scholars in 1955 and 1956 – Walter R. Martin – was a Baptist. In one way or another, including a Baptist scholar in this study brings memories of the conversations that SDA theologians had with Evangelicals, which conversations divided the SDA church in the area of Christology. This study may prove to be a uniting factor for the SDA church, as well as to invite further dialogue with Evangelical and other scholars.

Gulley's view is quite unique. The only extant writings I have come across outside SDA works are those of Henry Melvill, from whom some Adventist scholars seem to have borrowed their views in their formulation of what has been called 'the alternative Christology' (cf. e.g. Knight 1987:143). Melvill argues that Jesus' humanity was neither pre-fall nor post-fall humanity; it was unique (McIlvaine 1844:47). Although Gulley seems on the surface to espouse Melvill's model, in common with other SDA scholars who hold the alternative Christology or unique view, I doubt if his is really what has been termed 'the alternative Christology'. For many years, Gulley was viewed as a pre-fall Christo-

logist. His 1982 book, *Christ Our Substitute*, suggests that he espouses the unique Christology. However, scholars such as Zurcher (1999:222) have noted that he is a pre-fall Christologist. This will become clear when I will evaluate his Christology. However, I have, for the purposes of the study, assumed that he espouses 'the alternative Christology'. The 'born-again' position of Jesus Christ's human nature taught by Davis is not of interest to me, because it is not popular, both in Adventist and non-Adventist theological circles. Nevertheless, I will refer to it in the historical overview of Jesus Christ's human nature.

While it can be said with certainty that the Baptist position on the humanity of Jesus Christ is most likely the one held by Erickson, the SDA Church does not have a specific position. In this respect, Rodriguez (2003) has insightfully commented that 'the [SDA] church has wisely not elucidated in a doctrinal statement the specific nature of Jesus' human nature'. The SDA Church has allowed a plurality of views of the specific human nature of Jesus. The decision to let members hold either the post-fall or pre-fall views dates back to 1976. In this light, Sequeira (1996:110) reports that in a 1976 *Adventist Review* article, SDA church leaders stated that the SDA Church does not have a definite position on the subject of the humanity of Jesus and that members were free to hold either the pre-fall or the post-fall position.

Nevertheless, even with this comment fresh in mind, it can still be noted that some influential SDA scholars and church administrators have gone ahead to present what they thought best reflects what most SDAs throughout the world believe and teach in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Dederen 2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005). The position in these two books is that Jesus Christ took neither exactly the post-fall nor the pre-fall human nature (Dederen 2000:164). However, this view is, in my opinion, only held by Adventist scholars who have been influenced by the works of Adventist scholars such as Edward Heppenstall, Raoul Dederen, Roy Adams, and others. What is believed by all SDAs is the official position, which reads as follows:

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He also became also truly [human], Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:43).

This statement was voted by representatives of the SDA Church from different continents in what SDAs call the General Conference session. However, the explanation of this statement presented in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* lacks the authority of the only body that has the power to make doctrinal decisions. It is for this reason that the position of Jesus Christ's human nature in these two books needs to be critically analysed and evaluated in light of Scripture. In analysing and evaluating Gulley's position on the human nature of Jesus, I will necessarily be analysing and evaluating the view in the two books in question.

I see some problematic areas in the three views of Jesus Christ's human nature espoused by Sequeira, Erickson, and Gulley, respectively. Partly, these problematic areas have motivated me to undertake this study. In what follows I point out these problematic areas.

### **1.1.3 Problematic Areas in the Three Views of Jesus Christ's Human Nature**

There are statements that Sequeira has made, which need to be analysed and evaluated in light of Scripture. He claims, for instance: '[Jesus'] humanity was identical in every point

to ours (see Hebrews 2:17), so the body He received through Mary was a body of sin (see Galatians 4:4; Romans 1:3) dominated by the law of sin (see Romans 8:2, 3)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:146). If Sequeira's assertion is true, the question could be posed whether Jesus was a sinner or not, Himself maybe in need of a saviour? Another important question is: If Jesus received a body of sin from Mary, did He not Himself become part of the sin problem, instead of being God's solution to the problem? Questions like these need to be answered through this study.

Sequeira makes another statement that, in my view, needs to be critically analysed and evaluated: 'But as long as [Jesus] did not unite His *will* or *mind* to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner' (Sequeira 1996:164). What does Sequeira mean by this statement? Does he suggest that Jesus did not assume the mind of the fallen humanity? If that is what he means, is he not dichotomising a human being with respect to the sin problem? Is he trying to suggest that Jesus only assumed humanity's sinful flesh and not the sinful mind? It is necessary that these questions are answered through this study.

It is further necessary to evaluate this statement: 'Christ's flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, lusted after sin. But His mind, being spiritual, never yielded to sin, and thus He conquered sin in the flesh through the power of the Spirit (see Luke 4:13, 14)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). Does Sequeira, by this statement, bring Jesus to the level of a common human being? This study considers this question in light of Scripture.

There is also this statement: '[Jesus] was born of the Spirit and was divine' (Sequeira 2005:137). This statement echoes Sequeira's earlier statement: 'Christ was also born of the Spirit from His very conception (see Luke 1:35)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). The question Sequeira needs to answer is: Was Jesus conceived of the Holy Spirit, or was He born of the Holy Spirit? What does Sequeira mean by the phrase, 'Christ was born of the Spirit'?

Taking the pre-fall view of Jesus Christ's humanity, Erickson (2013:671) argues: 'Jesus's humanity was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall'. If this position is true, how did Jesus escape transmission of the tendency to sin through Mary, who was actually as fallen as all human beings are? Furthermore, did Jesus come to be a substitute for the unfallen humanity or the fallen humanity? These critical questions need to be answered in this study.

Erickson makes this important assertion: 'It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or of guilt from Mary to Jesus' (Erickson 2013:689). If this argument is true, why did God not do the same for the rest of humanity so that we do not struggle with the tendency to sin that is true for all of us? Does this argument not suggest that Jesus Christ did not struggle as much as we do when resisting sin, since He had a flesh in which the law of sin did not reside? Was it then not easier for Him to overcome temptation in a flesh which was like that of Adam and Eve before they fell than it was for us who possess a fallen, sinful flesh? If that is the case, then where is our hope when it comes to resisting temptation? These questions need to be answered in a satisfactory manner through this study.

On the aspect of how God brought about the existence of a male human being without a male human parent, Erickson (2013:686) argues:

Jesus was not produced after the genetic pattern of Mary alone, for in that case he would in effect have been a clone of her and would necessarily have been female. Rather, a male component was contributed. In other words, a sperm was united with the ovum provided by Mary, but it was specially created for the occasion instead of being supplied by an existing male human.

This is the argument that prompted me to select Erickson to represent scholars who espouse the pre-fall view of Jesus Christ's human nature. This argument needs to be evaluated in light of Scripture and genetics. Was it not possible for God to bring about a

male human being from Mary alone, without necessarily creating a sperm? If, as Erickson suggests, a sperm was needed in the creation of Jesus, why did God not let Joseph provide the sperm? Why did He not wait for Joseph to officially marry his bride-to-be so that Jesus Christ's human nature would be created after the genetic pattern of both Joseph and Mary? What was wrong with Joseph's sperm? These are the kind of questions that have partly motivated me to undertake this study.

Another issue about Erickson's Christology has to do with the type of body that Jesus now possesses in heaven. He opines that 'Jesus's ascension was not merely a physical and spatial change, but spiritual as well' (Erickson 2013:711), and claims: 'At that time Jesus underwent the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of his body' (Erickson 2013:711). This claim needs to be evaluated in light of Scripture.

There are some aspects of Gulley's Christology that need to be critically analysed and evaluated, for instance: 'Jesus actually met man where humanity was – taking upon Himself all the physical results of the Fall, but not the spiritual', and 'Spiritually He had the pre-fall human nature of Adam' (Gulley 1982:38). What do these assertions imply? Did Jesus have two types of human nature? How does Gulley's Christology differ from Erickson's, with respect to Jesus Christ's human nature? Do the two Christologists not in fact teach one and the same thing with regard to Jesus Christ's human nature? Gulley makes these insightful statements: 'Evil propensities (a leaning to sin) are 1) acquired through being born a sinner, and are 2) developed through sinning. Christ had neither' (Gulley 2012:454). If 'evil propensities are acquired through being born a sinner [born with a fallen human nature]', how did Jesus, who was born of Mary, who was herself a sinner like anyone else, escape these evil propensities? I will discuss this question in this study. Gulley argues: 'Just as all other humans need the new birth, so the saved will have their corruptible natures changed to incorruptible natures in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15). Yet no biblical verse speaks of Christ's need for either the new birth or a change of nature at His resurrection' (Gulley 2012:435). Gulley's argument that Jesus did not need a change of nature at His resurrection, needs to be critically evaluated. In Gulley's view, Jesus 'was

a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature; for God alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16)' (Gulley 2012:467). However, he states:

There is bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of resurrection. Christ didn't need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility, or from mortality to immortality, for He was sinless and divine (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) throughout His life on earth, and thus different from all His followers who will be raised at His second advent (1 Cor. 15:50-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-18) (Gulley 2012:471-472).

If Jesus was a union of an immortal, divine nature and a mortal, human nature, did not His mortal human side have to change at His resurrection? If the physical human nature that Jesus assumed was that of a fallen human being, did this not require a change at His resurrection? These are some of the questions I want to ask Gulley through this study. According to Gulley (2012:434), 'as God became the second Adam, He entered human creation and assumed human nature with its *damaged* image of God, even though He did not take its depravity'. What was *damaged* in the human nature that Jesus assumed? This question will be discussed in this study.

It is for the purpose of analysing and evaluating aspects of the Christology of each of the selected Christologists that I have engaged into this study. I hope to close this study with a position of Jesus Christ's human nature that answers the questions I have raised as I have been studying the positions of the selected Christologists.

To appreciate Erickson's view of how God created Jesus Christ's human nature and also the concept of inheritance as it relates to sin, I will briefly discuss human reproduction, genetics, and cloning.

#### **1.1.4 Human Reproduction, Genetics, and Cloning**

One of the characteristics of living organisms, including human beings, is the ability to multiply through reproduction. Living organisms reproduce in two ways: Asexually and

sexually. Human reproduction happens sexually. In sexual reproduction, when ovulation takes place in the female, and a sperm is present to fertilise the ovum, released by the ovary, a zygote is formed (Enger & Ross 2003:395). This zygote develops into an embryo, which develops for nine months until a baby is born.

Related to reproduction is genetics. Genetics is a biological study of genes – how genes produce characteristics, and how the characteristics are inherited (Enger & Ross 2003:172). A gene is a portion of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) that determines a characteristic (Enger & Ross 2003:172). A gene can also be defined as ‘an area on a chromosome that codes for one particular protein’ (Waugh & Grant 2014:473). When the cell prepares to divide, it is collected into highly visible, compact, sausage-shaped structures called chromosomes (Waugh & Grant 2014:438).

It is important to note that each chromosome is one of a pair, one inherited from the mother and one from the father. The human cell has 46 chromosomes that can be arranged as 23 pairs (Waugh & Grant 2014:438). When a cell has 23 pairs of chromosomes, it is called a *diploid* cell. Reproductive gametes (spermatozoa and ova), which have only half of the normal complement, that is, 23 chromosomes instead of 46, are said to be *haploid* cells (Waugh & Grant 2014:438).

Each pair of chromosomes is numbered. The first 22 pairs of chromosomes are collectively called *autosomes*, and the chromosomes of each pair contain the same amount of genetic material (Waugh & Grant 2014:438). Pair 23 of the chromosomes contains the sex chromosomes, as they determine whether the offspring will be male or female. The two sex chromosomes are unlike the autosomes in that they are not necessarily the same size. The Y chromosome is much shorter than the X chromosome and is carried only by males (Waugh & Grant 2014:438). If a child inherits two X chromosomes (XX), one from the father and one from the mother, that child is female. If, however, a child inherits an X from the mother and a Y from the father (XY), that child is male.



It is in light of the fact that in order for a child to be male, the father has to contribute a Y chromosome, while the mother has to contribute an X chromosome, that Erickson suggests that if Jesus Christ had been produced after Mary's genetic pattern alone, He would have been her clone, and necessarily female. This argument will be critically examined in this study. I must note that, since each parent contributes a total of 23 chromosomes, the question of how Jesus Christ was created in Mary's womb with a total number of 46 chromosomes requires critical examination in light of Erickson's philosophical argument.

Genes determine physical inheritance of characteristics. A set of all the genes necessary to specify an organism's complete list of characteristics, is called the *genome* (Enger & Ross 2003:172). There are two ways in which the term 'genome' is used: It may refer to the diploid ( $2n$ ) or haploid ( $n$ ) number of chromosomes in a cell. The *genotype* of an organism is a listing of the genes present in that organism. It is not possible to see the genotype of an organism because it simply consists of the cell's DNA code. Enger and Ross (2003:172) observe that it is not yet possible to know the complete genotype of most organisms, but it is often possible to figure out the genes present that determine a particular characteristic.

In diploid organisms there may be two different forms of the genes. It has been asserted that there may even be several alternative forms or *alleles* of each gene within a population (Enger & Ross 2003:172). For instance, in human beings there are two alleles for an earlobe shape. One allele produces an earlobe that is fleshy and hangs free, whereas the other allele produces a lobe that is attached to the side of the face and does not hang free. It can be argued that the type of earlobe that is present in the offspring is determined by the type of allele (gene) received from each parent and the way in which these alleles interact with each other.

According to Enger and Ross (2003:173), the way each combination of alleles expresses or shows itself, is known as the *phenotype* of the organism. This is what we physically

see in an offspring. The degree to which a gene goes through transcription and translation to show itself as an observable feature of the individual is called *gene expression*.

At this point it is important to note that it is scientifically proven that physical characteristics such as earlobe and skin colour are inheritable. For the purposes of this study, I need to ask: Is sin as nature genetically inheritable? In other words, is there a gene that determines inheritance of sin as nature (a tendency towards sin)? Little is known about inheritance of sin as nature (a tendency towards sin). In this study I will explore this theological question. This is very important, because one reason why prelapsarian Christologists reject the postlapsarian model of Jesus' humanity is that it suggests that Jesus was a sinner Himself in need of salvation.

We are born with a weak physical human nature, which gets tired and ages. How are these characteristics of our humanity transmitted from parents to their children? If these physical characteristics, which resulted from sin, are genetically inheritable (cf. Heppenstall 1977:126), is it not possible that the tendency to sin is also genetically inheritable? It is important to explore these questions through this study.

Cloning takes place in some living organisms through asexual reproduction. In mammals other than human beings, cloning has successfully been done in sheep, mice, and monkeys (Enger & Ross 2003:394). The oocytes are manipulated by removing the nucleus of the oocyte and by inserting the nucleus from a mature cell. The manipulated cell begins embryological development and can be implanted in the uterus of a female (Enger & Ross 2003:394). The cloned offspring is genetically identical with the individual that donated the nucleus.

Enger and Ross (2003:394) report that the technology for cloning humans is present, which can be used to harvest the oocyte. The nuclei can be transferred and the techniques for introducing them into a uterus are known. An attempt was made in 2001 to clone a human being. A group of researchers cloned a human embryo. The embryo, however, stopped developing at an early stage, and it died (Enger & Ross 2003:394).

That human beings can be cloned, is not in dispute. The point of discussion in this research is Erickson's argument that if Jesus Christ had been produced after Mary's genetic pattern alone, He would have been her clone and necessarily female. This argument will be critically analysed and evaluated in this study.

There is indeed a problem that this study seeks to address. Thus, I now orient myself to the research problem.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The three scholars selected for this study are Jack Sequeira, Millard J. Erickson, and Norman R. Gulley. They hold conflicting views of the human nature of Jesus Christ. In my view, not all of these views can be correct, creating the need to compare and contrast the views, and evaluate them in light of what is taught in Scripture. I will also propose which of the three views (if any) best reflects what Scripture teaches. There is also need to critically evaluate each scholar's view of how God brought a male human being into existence through one human parent. Thus, stated simply, the research problem is twofold: The plurality of views of the human nature of Jesus Christ, and His entrance into this world without the involvement of a male factor.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The main research question that guided this research is: Which model of Jesus' human nature takes into consideration the pre-fall and post-fall contexts of humanity, and adequately resolves the dual problem of sin? The following are sub-questions:

- Was Jesus Christ's humanity postlapsarian (post-fall), prelapsarian (pre-fall), or neither of the two?
- What were the undergirding philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced the abovementioned scholars to take their position of Jesus Christ's human nature?
- How did God bring about the existence of a male human being through one human parent?

- How does each of the abovementioned scholars define sin, and how does that influence the position that the scholar holds of Jesus Christ's human nature?
- How does the position of Jesus Christ's human nature that each scholar holds, compare with the others?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in the position of Jesus Christ's human nature that each scholar holds?
- Which of the positions (if any) best represents what is taught in Scripture? Could there be another position that needs to be proposed?

This study explores these sub-questions in order to answer the main research question and to arrive at a philosophically tenable Christological model, which is also biblically supported.

#### **1.4 Research Interest**

My interest in this study is that aspect of Christology that deals with Jesus Christ's human nature. In this case, I would like to study Jesus Christ's human nature in the contexts of the original creation of humanity, and humanity after humanity fell. Although references will be made to Jesus' *work*, my main interest is His *Person*. Reference to Jesus' work will be made simply because, in my opinion, it is almost impossible to discuss His Person without making reference to His work. I will evaluate the position of Sequeira, which is basically that Jesus Christ took the human nature of Adam after Adam had fallen into sin. Erickson holds the view that Jesus Christ took the pre-fall spiritual nature and the post-fall physical nature of Adam. I intend to evaluate this position in light of what is taught in Scripture. The other scholar, Gulley, holds the view that Jesus Christ's humanity was neither postlapsarian nor prelapsarian. As with the other views, I will evaluate this position in light of Scripture.

#### **1.5 Research Aims**

There are eight aims undergirding this study:

1. To compare and critically evaluate the views of Jack Sequeira, Millard J. Erickson, and Norman R. Gulley, about Jesus Christ's human nature.

2. To critically evaluate each scholar's view of how God brought about the existence of a male human being through one parent, and propose a view that is philosophically tenable and reflects what Scripture teaches.
3. To reconcile the prelapsarian model with the alternative or unique Christology.
4. To revise, refine, and extend the existing knowledge of Jesus Christ's human nature.
5. To discuss the incarnation in light of the genetic laws of heredity.
6. To critically evaluate both the creeds of Nicaea (325 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD).
7. To propose a position of Jesus Christ's human nature that best reflects what Scripture teaches.
8. To make recommendations in light of the findings of the study.

## **1.6 Rationale**

It is impossible that all the three positions (postlapsarian, prelapsarian, or neither postlapsarian nor prelapsarian) about Jesus Christ's human nature, held by the scholars under study, could be correct. One (if any) of them would be correct, and this should be the one that best reflects what Scripture teaches. The question regarding how God brought about the existence of a male human being with one human parent needs to be examined and critically evaluated. To that effect, therefore, this research is very significant. When one engages into a study on Christology, one cannot avoid discussing hamartiology – and I am not an exception. In other words, there is a need to find out to what extent the understanding of the nature of sin that each scholar under study holds, influences their proposed position of Jesus Christ's human nature. It must be noted, however, that hamartiology is only treated in this research to help me in the evaluation of the views about Jesus Christ's human nature.

In view of the fact that the Christological controversies in the SDA Church were ignited by conversations held between Evangelical and Adventist theologians, I see this study to be significant, because in a way, it is a repeat of those conversations, although in this case only through Christological works of one Baptist scholar and two Adventist scholars. It is possible that, through this study, SDA theologians may unite again on Jesus Christ's

human nature. It is also possible that through this study, Evangelical and SDA theologians may begin to teach one view of Jesus Christ's human nature.

The reason why SDA theologians need to unite on Jesus Christ's human nature is that, although both the post-fall and pre-fall models are acceptable within the SDA Church, this is true only in theory and not in practice. As noted by Sequeira (1996:110), 'Generally, anyone teaching or preaching the post-fall view is frowned upon by many of the brethren, and sometimes such an individual is looked upon as a heretic'. More than that, the alternative Christology has been promoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005), and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Dederen 2000); this is a contradiction of what is held in theory, that the SDA Church does not have a specific view of Jesus Christ's human nature. Although these two books are not products of church consensus, they hold a very influential place among both laity and clergy in the SDA Church. In fact, very few Adventists know that the position promoted in the two books is only a product of some selected leading and influential church leaders and theologians, and not necessarily an official position of the SDA Church. The implication of this is that those who may espouse and teach a contrary model, may be frowned upon and even called heretics. Therefore, a study like this one is very important.

### **1.7 Approach and Relevance**

Before proposing my approach to this study, I will first explain how and why I got interested in Christological studies. This is because, in my view, studies like this one, which are crucial to salvation, are best approached from personal experience.

When I just converted to Christianity, I read two books, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Waggoner 1999) and *The Consecrated Way* (Jones 2003), written by pioneer Adventists, Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones, respectively. Later I read Jack Sequeira's books, *Beyond Belief* (Sequeira [1993] 1999) and *Saviour of the World* (Sequeira 1996). I then read Robert J. Wieland's *Powerful Good News* (Wieland 1989). In all these books, the authors contend that the second Person of the Godhead assumed a post-fall human

nature. Ellen G. White's *Desire of Ages* (White 2006c), which led me to the Bible and eventually to Jesus Christ, seemed to be in harmony with the view held by the authors of the books mentioned above.

I somehow got disoriented when I read Jean R. Zurcher's *Touched with Our Feelings* (Zurcher 1999) and Eric Claude Webster's *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* (Webster 1984). There I learnt that Adventist theologians were actually divided on the subject of Jesus' human nature. I learnt that the view proposed in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* was not the one that the pioneers of the SDA Church taught from the time the church was organised to about 1952. I discovered that Adventists have failed to agree on the correct interpretation of Ellen White's statements on Jesus' human nature. It became clear to me that the reason for this confusion was the conversation between some SDA scholars and leaders and some Evangelical scholars and leaders in 1955 and 1956. Roy Adams' book, *The Nature of Christ* (Adams 1994), complicated the problem further because, while proposing the unique Christology, he maintains that Adventists believe and teach that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. In his view, Adventists have always taught this truth.

At first, I did not know what to do. As a pastor I was torn between teaching the post-fall view, which my conscience told me was biblically correct, and the view taught in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Since my view was somehow in conflict with the view held in these two books, I feared that supporters of the view in the two books might take me for a rebel. Sequeira and Zurcher assert that in Seventh-day Adventism's history, supporters of the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature were viewed as lunatics.

After completing my first degree in Theology, I decided to study Christology. I felt that if I were to come up with a view which I would confidently share with other scholars, I should study by research. In this way I would escape the influences that lecturers would have on my research. It also dawned on my mind that if my study were to produce good results, I should come up with my own approach.

There are basically three approaches to Christology, which Erickson (2013:608-615) has identified as 'Christology from Above', 'Christology from Below', and the 'Augustinian Model'.

### **1.7.1 Christology From Above**

'Christology from above' was the approach the Christologists of the first centuries of the Christian Church took (Erickson 2013:608). This approach was accepted without any question, because at that time there was no question as to the authenticity and reliability of God's word. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Emil Brunner, revived this approach.

The thrust of this approach is that 'Christian faith springs only out of the witness to Jesus of the preached message and written word of the Scriptures' (Brunner 1934:158). This, however, is not to suggest that the historical picture of Jesus is not important. The preached message and the written word do include the historical picture of Jesus.

'Christology from above' reached its height when Bultmann published his *Jesus and the Word* (Bultmann 1958a). However, other scholars reacted sharply to Bultmann's approach. The most significant of the early reactions came from Ernst Käsemann's *Problem of the Historical Jesus* published in 1954. Käsemann asserted the necessity of building belief in Jesus upon a historical search for who He was and what He did (cf. Erickson 2013:609). Pannenberg (1968:34) argues that the major problem with 'Christology from above' is that it presupposes the divinity of Jesus. It is his contention that the task of Christology is to offer rational support for the divinity of Jesus. This is because it is this aspect of the nature of Jesus that is disputed today. Since this study specifically deals with the humanity of Jesus, 'Christology from above' cannot help me to answer the questions, which have prompted the research.

Other Christologists have dealt with the problem of Christology from another angle, which has been termed 'Christology from below'. This is the subject of my next discussion.



### 1.7.2 Christology from Below

Wolfhart Pannenberg gives us the most instructive example of a recent 'Christology from below'. In his *Jesus-God and Man*, published in 1968, Pannenberg has produced a thorough christological treatment, as indicated by the title (Erickson 2013:610). This approach attempts to construct a full Christology from the man Jesus of Nazareth, including His deity. In his new quest for the historical Jesus, Pannenberg has managed to do this. Pannenberg (1968:23-25) contends that it is important to penetrate beyond the varied NT witnesses to discern the one Jesus to whom they all refer to.

It is important to note that the evidence most commonly adduced by 'Christology from below' in trying to establish Jesus' unity with God, is His pre-Easter claim to authority through declaration and deed, pointed out by theologians such as Elert (1956:303) and Althaus (1962a:430). Pannenberg argues: 'The basic agreement is striking. Dogmatics seems in this case to have preceded historical research' (Pannenberg 1968:57).

According to Erickson (2013:613), 'Christology from below' blunts the charge that at best Christian Christology is based upon faith and at worst it may be completely vacuous. This approach to Christology has attempted to eliminate undue amounts of subjectivity. 'Christology from below' avoids filtering it through the subjectivity of other believers, namely, the first disciples (Erickson 2013:610).

It is important to observe that, according to Erickson (2013:611), Pannenberg's effort to demonstrate Jesus' divinity through His pre-Easter claim to authority must be rejected as a failed one. However, this claim to authority is related to a future verification of His message, which will not take place until the final judgement. 'Rather', suggests Pannenberg (1968:66), 'everything depends upon the connection between Jesus' claim and its confirmation by God'.

I must state, however, that 'Christology from below' has one persistent problem. Especially in the version presented by Pannenberg, the success of 'Christology from below' depends upon establishing its historical contentions with objective certainty, which

is actually difficult to achieve (Erickson 2013:613). Althaus (1962b:321-330) maintains that Pannenberg's unitary view of history makes faith a function of reason. There is, therefore, need for an alternative approach.

### **1.7.3 The Alternative or Augustinian Model**

Erickson (2013:614) suggests that there is an alternative model, called the Augustinian model. In this model, faith precedes but does not remain permanently independent of reason. Faith provides the perspective or starting point from which reason may function, enabling one to understand what otherwise cannot be understood. The point is that faith and reason work together. Faith and reason are not incompatible. In other words, people of faith are also exercising reason.

When the Augustinian model is applied to the construction of a Christology, the starting point is the kerygma, the belief and preaching of the church about Jesus (Erickson 2013:614). The content of the kerygma serves as a hypothesis to interpret and integrate the data supplied by inquiry into the historical Jesus. According to this position, the early church's interpretation of faith in Jesus enables us to make better sense of the historical phenomena than does any other hypothesis. It should therefore be noted that the alternative model is not 'Christology from below', which, ignoring the kerygma, leads to conundrums in attempting to understand the 'mystery of Jesus', as theologians often referred to in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is not the unsupported 'Christology from above', which is constructed without reference to the early life of Jesus of Nazareth. The alternative model is tested and supported and rendered cogent by the ascertainable historical facts of who and what Jesus was and claimed to be (Erickson 2013:614).

I need to point out that the Augustinian model entails following neither faith alone nor historical reason alone, but both together in an intertwined, mutually dependent, simultaneously progressing fashion (Erickson 2013:614). Increased familiarity with the kerygmatic Christ will enable Bible students to understand and integrate more of the data of historical research. Similarly, an increased understanding of the Jesus of history will

more fully persuade us that the apostles' interpretation of the Christ of faith is true (Erickson 2013:615).

What is the approach chosen for this study? I subscribe to neither the 'Christology from above' nor the 'Christology from below'. Erickson's alternative model seems to fit this study. Nevertheless, I must state that the study compares and contrasts the views of three scholars. As such, it is difficult to simply select one approach and apply it to this study. In fact, this study deals with only one aspect of Christology – the humanity of Jesus Christ. The standard against which every position that a scholar claims to be supported by Scripture, should be tested by Scripture itself. Therefore, I will formulate my view of Jesus' human nature based on the NT data. I will be guided by the primary reason for the incarnation, which was basically to save fallen, sinful human beings (Matt 1:21). In His longest prayer for Himself and His disciples, which He offered prior to His death, Jesus Christ says: 'And this is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17:3). With this text in mind, I will formulate my model of Jesus' human nature based on John 1:1-3 and 14. In other words, I will study Jesus Himself, but not in isolation from the mission He came to accomplish here on earth.

As I read the works of the scholars under study (Sequeira, Erickson, and Gulley), I noticed that each one of them makes claims about Jesus Christ's human nature, which somehow makes sense, while at the same time some of these scholars seem to argue in support of their positions based on, what I believe are their biased views of what constitutes sin. This prompted me to approach this study from a *comparative* and *evaluative* position. First, I separately present the views of each scholar, noting in question form each aspect that needs to be compared with the views of the others and be evaluated. I then note the philosophical position that each scholar holds about sin and how they try to present a sinless Jesus, born of a woman who had a fallen human nature. I clearly point out the contributions each scholar has made to Christology. I also point out problematic areas in the three models of Jesus' human nature that the three scholars have proposed. I then propose my model of Jesus' human nature.

Where one has three systematic commentators on Scripture proposing completely different arguments regarding the same topic of study, the relevance of a research in that area of study is very conspicuous. There is a need to evaluate the philosophical orientation of each scholar, in order to appreciate why that scholar comes to certain conclusions, while others come to completely different conclusions. Christology is a very important topic in Systematic Theology, and in my view, it forms the foundation upon which salvation is built. There is need to revise, refine, and extend already existing knowledge of Jesus Christ's human nature. As I have already pointed out, two of the scholars (Sequeira and Gulley) are SDAs, while Erickson is a Baptist. Interestingly, the two Adventist scholars hold conflicting views of Jesus Christ's human nature. If the two Adventist scholars held the same view, while Erickson held a different view, I would have suggested that the reason could probably be due to the fact that these scholars are generally influenced by the positions held by their denominations. Unfortunately, this may include the biases and traditions, which may lack biblical support. Therefore, the fact that even scholars belonging to the same denomination may hold different views of Jesus Christ's human nature supports the relevance of this research. I have not come across previous research attempts in the area of Systematic Theology that compare and evaluate Adventist and non-Adventist views of Jesus Christ's human nature (in this case, looking at the works of Sequeira, Erickson, and Gulley). The only research work I have come across close to this study is that of Eric Claude Webster, which compares the works of four Adventist authors. Zurcher did a historical survey of Adventist thought on the human nature of Jesus – again, this was a survey of Adventist Christology. There is a possibility that other scholars have made similar attempts, but I have not laid my hands on their research works. Therefore, the originality of this research supports its relevance.

Each area of research works with a particular methodology, which the researcher believes is suited to their study. Thus, in what follows, I describe the methodology I have chosen for this research.

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

The nature of this research is a *qualitative* review of literature, focused on the works of the scholars I have selected for scrutiny in this study, on Jesus Christ's human nature. It is *comparative* and *evaluative*. I will combine the representative and thematic approaches. The representative approach will be used in the review of the works of the selected scholars. The thematic approach will be used to confine Christological themes to manageable sub-headings to be discussed under each scholar, and to give me direction in the evaluation chapters. It is a desk research where data is collected from the works of the scholars under study and others who have written on the topic of research. After giving a historical overview of the theories of the nature of Jesus Christ, I will present the three views about His human nature (postlapsarian, prelapsarian, and neither postlapsarian nor prelapsarian) based on the works of the scholars who hold these views. I will use primary, secondary and tertiary literature, not only written by the scholars under study, but also by other scholars who have commented on Jesus Christ's human nature. As I review the works of the scholars selected for this study, I will ask them questions that will guide me when I get to the stage of evaluation.

In the evaluation chapters, I will compare and contrast the views of the scholars under study, pointing out their strengths/contributions and weaknesses/problematic areas in those views. I intend to evaluate Erickson's Christology in particular by comparing and contrasting his claims with scientific facts. This will involve an interdisciplinary component. I have included chapter 10 specifically for this purpose. The Bible will be the standard norm against which the Christological models of the scholars under study will be tested. I will then propose what, in my view, best reflects what Scripture teaches and is philosophically tenable.

## **1.9 My Position as a Researcher**

It is important for me to introduce myself as a researcher, as this will clarify the context of certain statements which I will make in this study, which without clarification may be misunderstood, since theologians hold varying views on many Bible topics.

I am a first-generation Seventh-day Adventist Christian by conviction and choice. Additionally, I am an ordained Minister of the Gospel in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I hold with others of this faith, certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures (cf. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2015:162). Relevant to this study are the first six beliefs as listed in the statement of SDA fundamental beliefs: 1) *The Holy Scriptures*, 2) *The Trinity*, 3) *The Father*, 4) *The Son*, 5) *The Holy Spirit*, and 6) *Creation* (cf. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2015:162-164). The doctrine of 'The Son' is the subject of this study. The doctrines of 'The Holy Scriptures', 'The Trinity', 'The Father', 'The Holy Spirit', and 'Creation', while related to the doctrine of 'The Son', will only be referred to in this study. For the purposes of this study, I will reproduce the doctrines of 'The Holy Scriptures' and 'Creation' and make preliminary remarks about them relevant to this study. I believe that:

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21) (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2015:162).

I take what has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures to reflect everything that God intended to reveal for the knowledge of the salvation of humankind (cf. Deut 29:29). I believe that the first eleven chapters of Genesis (Gen 1-11) are literal and that they record what really took place. I believe that Genesis 1 and 2 reveal a knowledge of how God created this world, without which we would be in the dark with regard to our origin. I also believe that Genesis 3 explains *how*, but not *why* sin entered, and in my opinion, without

this chapter in the Bible, we would not know *how* sin entered this world. In my view, Genesis 3:15 is God's announcement of His plan of salvation. It is the 'everlasting gospel' promised to fallen humankind. This is what I believe, based on my own study of the Holy Scriptures, which study is beyond the scope of this present research.

Since this study focuses on the human nature of Jesus in the contexts of the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity, it is important for me to state what I believe about creation. In my view, the doctrine of 'Creation' is indispensable in our study of the human nature of Jesus. Thus, I believe that:

God has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical account of His creative activity. He created the universe, and in a recent six-day creation the Lord made "the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" and rested on the seventh day. Thus, He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the work He performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was 'very good', declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1-2; 5; 11; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Isa. 45:12, 18; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7) (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2015:163-164).

The SDA doctrine of 'Creation', which I have reproduced above does not (rightly so) allow me to accept some scientific, or evolutionary, or historical explanations about the origin of life, which contradict what in my opinion, has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. I am a Bible-believing creationist. After comparing the Genesis account of creation (Gen 1-2) with the claims of the evolution theory, I have accepted the Genesis account of the origin of life on earth against the claims of the evolution theory. I share the views of Norman Gulley and join him in rejecting the evolutionary theory (cf. Gulley 2012:170-389).

I do not accept any evolutionary explanation about the origin of life. While I may study evolution as an academic exercise, it is settled in my mind that the evolution theory contradicts the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and therefore I do not subscribe to it. Additionally, I do not accept the theistic evolution, which in my view, is an attempt by theologians to reconcile the claims of atheistic evolution and biblical creation (cf. Gulley 2012:179-251). In my view, God has revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the origins of life, sin, suffering, and death (cf. Gen 1-3). The global flood (Gen 6-8) answers the questions raised by evolution. I see in the Holy Scriptures the origins of the people who now inhabit this earth (cf. Gen 9-11). In my view, while science in general is not incompatible with the claims of the Holy Scriptures, evolution (atheistic or theistic), is incompatible with the Holy Scriptures. It is my well-considered opinion that the Holy Scriptures must inform science and not *vice versa*. In our quest for knowledge, we must always begin and end with the Holy Scriptures. Science must always be a servant of the Holy Scriptures. I am persuaded that the Cambridge University theology student, Charles Darwin, would not have shipwrecked his faith if he had studied Genesis 1-11 more diligently than he did the natural world.

I have accepted the doctrines of 'The Holy Scriptures' and 'Creation' as taught by the SDA Church after much study, and I am convinced that both of them reflect the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Thus, in this study, any statements I make with respect to these two doctrines reflect, to the best of my knowledge, what I believe as a Seventh-day Adventist.

There is a need to point out, however, that I will in this study, explore the subject of the human nature of Jesus, without any restriction from the SDA Church, because as I have noted above, the SDA Church does not have a specific position on the human nature of Jesus, except what is reflected in the statement of fundamental belief number 4) *The Son*, which explains what all SDAs believe. Whatever position I arrive at, is my own responsibility as a free and independent researcher. It will have no bearing on the SDA Church, except that it may either unite the Church or ignite more Christological debates.



I believe that the topic needs to be studied transparently and scholarly. This is the only way I will make a meaningful contribution to Christology.

### **1.10 The Way Forward**

From the 1<sup>st</sup> century onwards, views of Jesus Christ's human nature have competed for recognition. There are those views that take Jesus to have been divine, and those views that hold Him to have been human. Christological models have been formulated based on some categories: Ontological Christology, Speculative Christology, 'History of Jesus' Christology, Existential Christology, and Functional Christology (cf. Webster 1984:6-26). Councils have been held that have formulated creeds, such as the Nicene Council (325 AD) and the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). These two councils serve as landmark councils in the history of Christology, for the Christological positions that are held by scholars of various Christian denominations either align themselves with the creeds formulated at these councils, or depart from them. It is my assumption that the scholars I have selected for this study have in one way or another been influenced by either the Christological categories or the creeds formulated at the two landmark councils. They probably have also been influenced by the Christological orientations of their denominations. For these reasons, I have devoted chapters 2 to 4 of this study to a historical overview of Jesus Christ's human nature. I do not intend to present a water-tight chronological outline of the history of Christology. Others have applied themselves to a study of that nature and, additionally, this would fall beyond the scope of the present thesis. After giving this outline of the history of Christology, I will give an overview of Roman Catholic Christology, Eastern Orthodox Christology, Evangelical Christology, and SDA Christology. I will do this in chapters 5 and 6. I believe that the views held by these four mainstream bodies of Christianity serve as good reference points for a study like this one.

In chapter 7, I will review Sequeira's works on the post-fall view of Jesus Christ's human nature. I will begin this review with his understanding of the concept of sin, for I have assumed that his model of Jesus Christ's human nature has been influenced by his understanding of the nature of sin. In this review, I will ask questions that will later guide me in evaluating his view of Jesus Christ's human nature. Included in this review are

Sequeira's views of Jesus' death, resurrection, and the nature of His body after His resurrection in relation to the human nature that He assumed.

Chapter 8 has been devoted to a review of Erickson's works on Jesus Christ's human nature. I basically follow the order according to the review of Sequeira's works. The chapter that follows (chapter 9) is a review of Gulley's works on Jesus Christ's human nature, whose order is not different from the order followed in the preceding two chapters.

In order not to misrepresent the three selected Christologists, I have decided to let each one of them clarify what they believe by as much as possible making lengthy quotations of their works. In other words, chapters 7, 8 and 9 are meant to simply present the views of the three Christologists. While I make some remarks and ask questions on some of the statements of the three Christologists, I have reserved my critical comments for the evaluation chapters (11-14). I believe that in this way, I will be fair to the three Christologists. Since in my view, this is a thorny topic, it is only fair that I act transparently by presenting the views of these scholars as they appear in their works. The reason for this is that I have read a lot of research-based documents, which have been challenged as having misrepresented the views of the scholars whose works were reviewed and evaluated. The three chapters in which I review the views of the three scholars are simply meant to serve as a context and reference point for the evaluation chapters. Thus, I have intentionally not seriously discussed the works of the three scholars in these three chapters. I would like to be as courteous as I can be to the scholars that I have selected for this study.

In chapter 10, I discuss human reproduction, genetics and human cloning. This chapter is intended to assist me in the evaluation of Erickson's view that God had to create a human sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum. It is also intended to assist me to make a judgement on how Erickson and Gulley suggest sin as nature (a tendency or leaning) was not transmitted to Jesus, while every other human being who has ever existed, received it.

I evaluate the Christological models of the three scholars in chapters 11 to 14. In order to do justice to each scholar's model, I have decided to evaluate their Christological model in three separate chapters. In chapter 14, I compare and contrast the Christological models of the three scholars.

The final chapter (chapter 15) has been devoted to the formulation of my own model of Jesus' human nature. I do this after evaluating the landmark creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon. After briefly outlining the natures of humanity before and after the entrance of sin, I turn to a discussion of Jesus Christ's human nature. Using John 1:1-3 and 14, and Genesis 1-3 as my starting point, I propose what to me is a philosophically tenable model of Jesus Christ's human nature. This is preceded by an analysis of some NT texts that, in my view, support the proposed model. I then make some recommendations. A conclusion is then drawn.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE TO GENERAL CHRISTOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

Several attempts have been made to categorise Christological thought into different classifications. For example, in his book, *Christus, die Middelaar*, published in 1977, Jonker has basically divided Christology into the two broad categories of ontological and functional Christology with various shades in each. In *The Shape of Christology*, McIntyre (1966) has offered a different classification of Christology. After a personal reflection, I have decided to adopt this classification which focuses on five categories. Webster (1984:7), who also adopts this classification, asserts: 'It certainly remains only one suggestion amongst many other possibilities'. My choice of this classification is based on the fact that these five categories cover the history of Christology from the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and they apply even in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Christological thought. The categories, for the purposes of this study, are Ontological Christology, Speculative Christology, the 'History of Jesus' Christology, Existential Christology, and Functional Christology. It is my personal reflection that the main emphases and trends in Christological thought throughout history may be divided into anyone of the above five categories. Such a scheme will help me to get a rich overview of Christology in general and will be useful in giving perspective to my analysis and evaluation of the three representative Christologists selected for this study. While I will not make an attempt to place my selected Christologists under any of the five categories, a review of these categories will orient me to Christological thinking that has shaped the history of Christology in general, and which I assume, has influenced the formulation of the Christological models proposed by these scholars.

#### 2.2 Descriptions of the Categories

Ontological Christology is an approach to Christology which emphasises the 'being' and 'essence' of the Person of Jesus Christ and not necessarily His work (cf. Webster 1984:7). The approach focuses on the nature and substance of Jesus Christ. When scholars talk

about Functional Christology, they refer to that type of Christology that focuses on the meaning and significance of the mission and work of Jesus Christ. In Functional Christology, Jesus Christ has the task of saving human beings and revealing His Father, without necessarily subscribing to the formula of Chalcedon. By the 'History of Jesus' Christology, Christological thinkers refer to the approach to Christology in which researchers seek to go behind the Gospel narratives and strip them of what they think were just the early church's accretions, which unfortunately hide the genuine historical Jesus that the Gospels are supposed to reveal. In this approach to Christology, Jesus is regarded as a real historical figure – a figure who relates to history in actuality, but who unfortunately is hidden behind some statements of faith in the Gospels. Speculative Christology refers to that approach to the Christological problem in which various forms of idealism become the *loci* where the infinite and finite merge. It is not uncommon in this system to find that the historic Jesus loses His significance in God's plan of salvation and becomes just a symbolic embodiment of a metaphysical idea, which is vast and complex. It must be observed that Existential Christologists focus on Jesus' present impact on the believer's life. Thus, the Christ of the *kerygma* and proclamation is the one who meets a person in that person's existence, choices and need, without undue regard to dogmatic exactitudes or ontological formulations, which occupy the attention of ontological Christologists. Existential Christology therefore introduces a present Christ who serves as a medium through whom a person can understand and accept the authenticity and reality of such a person's own individual existence. This brief description of the Christological categories necessarily leads to a historical perspective of these categories.

### **2.3 The Historical Perspective of the Categories**

When one looks at these approaches from a historical perspective, that person notices that, while there is a certain amount of overlap in time between these various Christological categories, there are certain historical periods which are dominated by one or another of these tendencies (Webster 1984:8). I would thus suggest that ontological Christology had its genesis in the first few centuries of the Christian era when the philosophical climate was dominated by the thought patterns of the Grecian world. This type of Christology persisted throughout the Middle Ages and flowered again during the

Reformation period. It is not uncommon even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to come across ontological sentiments relating to Christology, although some Christologists suggest that in our study of Christology, we should not focus on the ontological perspective. It is suggested that in Christology we will do well by following Paul's method in laying the emphasis on clarifying the *fact* of salvation in the unique Jesus, rather than exploring His ontological status (Donkor 2005:18).

According to Webster (1984:8), the background of the speculative movement was furnished by the rationalism of the *Aufklärung* around the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was the age of enlightenment and reason, and speculative Christology was spawned in the seedbeds of anthropocentric and scientific concern. Speculative Christology has persisted and has had some representatives even in modern times.

It should be observed that the 'History of Jesus' Christology was also conceived in the spirit of the *Aufklärung* but was actually birthed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Webster 1984:8). Being the age of liberalism, it was conducive to a deep concern for the hard bones of historical fact. There is need to note that, while the wave of historical concern of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ebbed, there have been fresh waves of interest in the 'History of Jesus' Christology.

Existential Christology saw its heyday in the early- and middle-20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the Bultmanian era (Webster 1984:8). This approach to Christology and life in general was particularly appropriate in the aftermath of a world conflict which left much of Europe dazed by the seeming futility of life. Webster observes that there have been enough disciples of Bultmann to periodically inject new life into the limbs and body of this Existential Christology.

The last category, namely Functional Christology, while very much in vogue in our modern times, can trace its roots back to Schleiermacher (Webster 1984:9). In Webster's opinion, the *Weltanschauung* of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was most conducive to this pattern of thought. In this thought pattern, life is seen in scientific and pragmatic terms

and thus the 'miracle' of the incarnation is viewed as a stumbling block to modern Christianity. In today's thought it is easier to accept Jesus Christ as a representative of truth than to confuse Him with the substance of an unknown 'God'. It is therefore clear that, while these categories are not to be confined to watertight compartments, they do reflect consecutively the five dominant approaches in the history of Christology from the 1<sup>st</sup> century to modern times. I will now look at the categories in more detail.

### **2.3.1 Ontological Christology**

Most of the Christological controversies and subtleties of the early centuries, through the Middle Ages may be classified as ontological by nature (Webster 1984:9). Docetism, Ebionitism, Modalism, and Dynamic Monarchianism were all argued from the ontological point of view. It has been noted that the historic declaration at Nicaea in 325 AD remains a monument to the ontological struggles in the Christology of the early centuries.

There is no doubt that the mental and logical agility of men like Apollinaris, Eutyches, and Nestorius were devoted to the arena of an ontological debate within Christology (Webster 1984:10). Most of the standard works on Christology and church history elucidate the involvements of these men and their contribution to the ontological Christological struggle. These include works of Mackintosh (1913/1914:196-215) and Seeberg (1977:243-272), while the Chalcedonian statement of 451 AD remains a watershed for ontological Christology. Since Chalcedon, no ontological debates as lively and contentious as those have arisen in the entire body of Jesus (the Christian Church). It is probably only in SDA circles (from about 1955/1956) that one finds almost a repeat of the debates that led to Chalcedon. Of course, in the SDA Church the debates focused only on Christ's human nature. Apart from that, the early Christological debates produced creedal statements that somehow united the Christian Church, whereas SDA Christological debates tended to disunite theologians. It is interesting to note, however, that while SDA theologians are divided on Christology, the Church itself has found a convenient formula to remain united: Believers are free to hold any of the two leading views of Jesus' human nature (postlapsarian or prelapsarian) (Sequeira 1996:110).

The ontological approach to Christology is also revealed in the dialogue concerning the *anyhypostasia* and *enhyypostasia*, in the monophysite and monothelite controversies, in the Roman Catholic influence of transubstantiation upon Christology and the transcendental emphasis of thinkers like Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, in the Reformation thinking of men like Luther and Calvin, and even the kenotic theories and proposals (Webster 1984:11-12).

As I noted above, modern Christology is not devoid of examples of completely ontological Christology. For instance, the Christology of the dialectical theologian, Karl Barth, must be considered in the mould of the classical ontological style, albeit with different nuances (Webster 1984:12). Sequeira fits well in the ontological category of these Christologists, although he also leans towards functionalism. Although DM Baillie represents a school of Christology which emphasises the element of paradox, he finds himself at home in the ontological Christology category. His thoughts are expressed in his *God Was in Christ* (Baillie 1948:106-132), especially in the chapter, 'The Paradox of the incarnation'. Pannenberg, although taking his starting point '*von unten*' instead of '*von oben*', ends up accepting the *vere deus* and finds his Christological thought compatible with elements that could be classified under Ontological Christology (Webster 1984:12-13). Pannenberg gives reasons why he does not build a 'Christology from above' but favours the approach 'from below'. He writes:

Therefore, our starting point must lie in the question about the man Jesus; only in this way can we ask about his divinity. How the divine *Logos*, the Second Person of the Trinity, would be thought of apart from the incarnation and thus apart from the man Jesus completely escapes our imagination (Pannenberg 1968:35).

The modern Roman Catholic theologian, Walter Kasper, presents a Christology which also begins 'from below' but ends clearly with *vere deus*. When his exposition of the reality of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus is analysed, it is found to fall in the category of Ontological Christology (Webster 1984:13). It should be kept in mind, however, that very often a particular theologian may show tendencies of belonging to more than one



Christological category. It would therefore be an oversimplification if I were to insist that every Christologist demonstrates only one strand of thought.

While some theologians treat Christology from an ontological perspective, others are comfortable to work out their Christology from the speculative point of view. Thus, I now turn to Speculative Christology.

### **2.3.2 Speculative Christology**

Speculative Christology owes much to the thinking of philosophers like Kant and Hegel. It must be noted, nevertheless, that its roots run deep into the beginning of the Christian era (Webster 1984:13). Origen (ca. 185-254) has been suggested to be the father of Speculative Christology. Mackintosh (1913/2014:164-165) makes this observation concerning Origen: 'Though conscious of a staunch fidelity to the historic faith, he felt it essential that the contents of the creed should at the same time be sublimated by the methods of reverent speculation, provided only that the limits of ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition were recognized'.

Gnosticism had a speculative influence upon Christology. In this light, Grillmeier (1975:69) asserts: 'Early Christian, Gnostic-inspired writings make speculations from it concerning the being of Jesus'. A detailed discussion of Gnosticism and Christology is done by Grillmeier (1975:79-84), which it is not my intention to engage into in this study. The concept of emanations from God in which creature and Creator are lost and submerged are characteristic of Gnosticism and were influential.

It has been observed that Spinoza, the Jewish intellectual who was excommunicated from the Hebrew fraternity, did some preparatory work to the thought of Kant and Hegel in more modern times. In 77 pages, Willis (1870:1-77) makes comments on the life of Benedict de Spinoza. For Spinoza, all human beings were manifestations of the Divine essence and while he could agree that Jesus of Nazareth had a larger infusion of essence than others, he could never conceive that Jesus was God (cf. Webster 1984:14).

Immanuel Kant's thinking illustrates the approach of Speculative Christology. An analysis of Kant's thinking shows a sharp distinction between the historical Jesus and Christ as 'idea' where the historical Jesus loses His real significance. Kant's Christological doctrine 'takes a form in which the incarnate Son of God is interpreted as "the idea set before us for our emulation" of moral perfection' (Barth 1972:288). In this concept of idealism, the idea of Christ is swallowed up in the total web of humanity. Kant's thought has been criticised in this manner:

Thus if, according to Kant, something corresponding to what is called the 'Word' in the prologue to St. John's Gospel exists, there is certainly, according to him, no suggestion that this word might by any chance have become flesh. To the religion of reason, the Son of God is not a man, but 'the abstraction of humanity' (Barth 1972:288).

There is no doubt that speculative thinking has certainly presented a threat to the traditional idea of the Person of Jesus Christ. Speculative thinking has been defined as dissolving something real and setting it in opposition to itself in such a way that the differences as determined by one's thinking are set in opposition and the object is conceived as a unity of both (Barth 1972:288).

Like Kant, Hegel has had a very important philosophical influence in setting forth the idea of the ontological unity between the infinite and the finite, between God and humankind (Webster 1984:15). The whole history of the world is looked upon as an expression of God, a happening in God Himself.

Though Paul Tillich follows in some ways in the footsteps of functional Christologists, thus in the tradition of such notable theologians like Schleiermacher, and also stands close to ontological terminology, he can best be understood in terms of Speculative Christology (Webster 1984:15). The works of Karl Rahner and Jurgen Moltmann can also be seen as illustrative of aspects of Speculative Christology. This speculative aspect is seen in Rahner's 'transcendental Christology' where he believes that in Jesus Christ human-

kind has attained to God in an ultimate act of self-transcendence and God's self-bestowal has been seen in its most radical form (Rahner 1974:227).

In his *The Crucified God*, Moltmann (1974:82-111) gives a detailed argument that God 'is' where He 'happens' and this was on Calvary in the manifestation of the love of the Father and the Son. Calvary is the ultimate expression of God's love, and we cannot find any better place for His 'happening'. The Father is not a personal God 'in the heavens', but love. This love is unconditional and without boundary in its acceptance of every unlovely and deserted person. A note should be made that for Moltmann, God is the future-oriented power of love which encompasses the whole of human history and moves towards the triumph of love over hate, life over death and liberty over bondage. Moltmann has also presented these views in his *Theology of Hope* (Moltmann 1967).

Other Christologists align themselves with 'History of Jesus' Christology. Thus, in what follows, I discuss this category of Christology.

### **2.3.3 'History of Jesus' Christology**

In the 'History of Jesus' Christology, there is an interest in the actual historical Person of Jesus of Nazareth (Webster 1984:17). Christologists who subscribe to this category are not satisfied with a theoretical discussion of dogmatic Christology based either on the creeds or *kerygma*, or with the philosophical approach of Speculative Christology. They therefore make the 'History of Jesus' Christology the focus of theological research. I need to note that the overriding concern in this type of Christology is to unearth either the essential facts of the life of Jesus or the essential features of His teaching through historical research.

When one surveys the history of Christology, one notices that this type of Christology was exemplified in the search for the historical Jesus during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and then again, particularly in a revival of this interest in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It must be noted that while the search in the earliest period had honest intentions for faith, it was strongly motivated by rationalism. Schweitzer (1954:200) says of Renan, Strauss,

Schenkel, Weizsacker and Keim: 'They all portray the Jesus of liberal theology; the only difference is that one is a little more conscientious in his colouring than another, and one perhaps has a little more taste than another, or is less concerned about the consequences'.

Otherwise, they all subscribed to the 'History of Jesus' Christology. What Schweitzer says, may be regarded as to whether we are looking at Reimarus or Strauss or at the fictitious *Lives of Jesus* by men like Bahrdt and Venturini (Webster 1984:17-18). The fictitious *Lives of Jesus* produced at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, first attempted to apply, with logical consistency, a non-supernatural interpretation to the miracle stories of the Gospel (cf. Schweitzer 1954:38-47). In many instances the research was also carried out with an antagonism against the supernatural aura which it felt had been built up around Jesus Christ. According to Schweitzer, 'They were eager to picture Him as truly and purely human, to strip from Him the robes of splendour with which He had been apparelled, and clothe Him once more with the coarse garments in which He had walked in Galilee' (Schweitzer 1954:5).

Schweitzer was convinced that one of the greatest contributions of German theology was made during the critical investigation of the life of Jesus during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He places a high value on this critical investigation, stating, 'For this reason the history of the critical study of the life of Jesus is of higher intrinsic value than the history of the study of ancient dogma or the attempts to create a new one' (Schweitzer 1954:2).

Despite the limitations of this type of investigation, Schweitzer (1954:311) was sure that those German theologians who had wrestled with the historic Jesus of Nazareth, though they could not take Him with them, yet, like men who had seen God face to face and received strength in their souls, they went on their way with renewed courage, ready to battle with the world and its powers.

Hermann Samuel Reimarus was born in 1694 and he died in 1768. His writings asserted the claims of rational religion as against the faith of the church. After his death, Lessing

published the most important fragments of Reimarus' *Magnum Opus* (Webster 1984:17). In this light Schweitzer (1954:23) asserts: 'His work is perhaps the most splendid achievement in the whole course of the historical investigation of the life of Jesus, for he was the first to grasp the fact that the world of thought in which Jesus moved was essentially eschatological'.

Strauss (1835/1836) produced his first edition of the *Life of Jesus* in two volumes of 1480 pages (cf. Webster 1984:17). Although Schweitzer (1954:78, 97) speaks of this book as 'one of the most perfect things in the whole range of learned literature', he admits: 'Scarcely ever has a book let loose such a storm of controversy'. Amongst the milder opponents of the book was Neander, who, while recognising that the book would be a danger to the church, appealed for an answer by argument rather than by arbitrary banning (Webster 1984:18). In other words, Neander felt that Strauss' book needed to be responded to by an argument that would prove that its claims were false. Merely banning it would not protect the church from its dangerous influence, for it was possible that the author would find other means to propagate its contents. It was his contention that the better approach was not to ban the supposed heretic's view, but to write something to counter it.

There is a need to note at this point that the more modern approaches to the quest of the historical Jesus during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were more influential in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The renewal, which was initiated by Karl Rahner's article on Chalcedon as an end or beginning (cf. Rahner 1954:3-49) and Ernst Käsemann's lecture in Marburg on *The Problem of the historical Jesus (Das Problem des historischen Jesus)* (cf. Käsemann 1954:125-153), set the stage for a 'new quest' of the historical Jesus that, while differing from the old quest in focus and method, nevertheless retained its concern for the historical Jesus (Webster 1984:18-19). The importance of this 'new quest' for the historical Jesus can be seen when Käsemann's challenge was taken up by representatives of both Catholicism and Protestantism. Käsemann, while following in the footsteps of Bultmann, called for a drastic reversal from *kerygma* orientation to an interest in the history of Jesus. Amongst Catholics who took up the challenge, mention must be

made of Von Balthasar, Breuning, Kung, Muhlen, Rahner, Ratzinger, Schmaus, Wiederkehr, Hulsbosch, Schillebeeckx, Schoonenberg, Duquoc, and Galot (cf. Webster 1984:19). Protestant theologians on the list include Barth, Braun, Buri, Ebeling, Fuchs, Gogarten, Jungel, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Schafer, and Tillich (Webster 1984:19). A review of the works of these theologians is beyond the scope of this study. What should be noted, nevertheless, is that in the present emphasis on the historical quest for Jesus, the liberal research into the life of Jesus of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is a lost cause.

According to Webster (1984:19), the new quest for the historical Jesus proceeds from the premise of present belief, and measures that faith by its content, Jesus Christ. Note should be made that the characteristics of this quest are first a rejection of myth and Docetism. The revelation of God 'in the flesh' and the salvific meaning of the true humanity of Jesus are emphasised. Second, the new quest does not bypass the *kerygma*, but takes note of this aspect. To indicate the importance of the 'new quest' for the historical Jesus, there is a need to mention Kasper's conviction that the right way of re-establishing Christology today, is to take the element of a unilateral kerygma-and-dogma-Christology and one exclusively oriented to the historical Jesus with equal seriousness (Kasper 1976:19).

The above discussion motivates me to note, therefore, that whether a certain Christology currently shows signs of the rationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or more signs of the Christology of complementarity, in which the earthly Jesus and the exalted Jesus are linked together (Kasper 1976:35), the import of the quest for the historical Jesus is influential, and with Webster (1984:20) and other Christologists I can rightly speak of a 'History of Jesus' Christology. With this statement fresh in the mind, I am moving to a discussion of Existential Christology.

#### **2.3.4 Existential Christology**

The roots of Existential Christology run deep in the philosophical thought of men like Kierkegaard and Heidegger. In his *Existentialism* (Macquarrie 1973), Macquarrie gives an introduction to Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger, and existentialism in general. However, the modern movement owes much to the impetus of Martin Kahler who

emphasised the distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. In Kahler's view, the search for the historical Jesus is irrelevant, for it can only lead to an ebionic picture of Jesus. Kahler makes a difference between *Historie* and *Geschichte* and it is the 'geschichtliche Christus' who in His supra-historical significance meets humanity whenever the gospel is preached (Webster 1984:20).

It must be noted that Kahler's influence spilled over into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and can be seen especially in dialectical theology. It has been observed that both Barth and Bultmann followed Kahler in their rejection of a search for the historical Jesus in favour of the Christ of the Word and of proclamation, respectively (Webster 1984:20-21). It will be seen that Bultmann based his position on his form criticism of the NT together with his existential interpretation. It is not my intention to discuss form criticism, for it is not relevant to this present study, but reference could be made to *Form Criticism, Two Essays on New Testament Research*, written by Bultmann and Kundsinn (1962). Instead of historical significance for Jesus, Bultmann places meaning on the kerygmatic proclamation of Christ, and rather than interest in the salvation acts of God in Jesus through history, he emphasises the actual meaning of the proclamation for the self-understanding of humanity in the here and now. It is Bultmann's conviction that the only thing humans need for faith and proclamation is the 'that' of the life and death of Jesus and that the 'what' of His life, self-consciousness, activity, and preaching is irrelevant. Barth parted company with Bultmann because of his existential interpretation and showed much greater appreciation for the historical act of God in the life and history of Jesus Christ.

Demythologisation under the skilful scalpel of Bultmann became a further characteristic of Existential Christology. Bultmann (1958b:18) argues: 'This method of interpretation of the New Testament which tries to recover the deeper meaning behind the mythological conceptions I call *de-mythologizing* – an unsatisfactory word, to be sure. Its aim is not to eliminate the mythological statements but to interpret them'.

For Bultmann, the synoptic tradition is a product and projection of the needs of the early church known as *Gemeindetheologie*. He proceeded to dissect this early theology and to

lay bare the essential element of decision concerning humanity's self-understanding (Webster 1984:21). In Bultmann's theology, the message of the Christ of faith is subjected to an existential interpretation which means that it is understood in anthropological terms. What this suggests is that the connection between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith can only be described in its existential application.

How does Bultmann then see salvation? He sees salvation as a human being coming to his/her *Selbstverständnis*, which happens when they respond to the call which comes to them through kerygmatic proclamation (Webster 1984:21-22). It should be noted that, in Bultmann's view, in Jesus Christ's message, God has acted eschatologically and the message of the faith community becomes the vehicle for him to come to a decision. Bultmann reduces the work of Jesus to His 'call to repentance' and Christology finds its kernel in what He is for us (*pro nobis*). In this light, it can be suggested that in Existential Christology there are strong leanings towards a Functional Christology. As a matter of fact, Existential Christology is closely tied to anthropology and lies much closer to a Functional than an Ontological Christology.

Thus, in all types of Existential Christology, the actual being of Jesus and His identity of substance with the Father loses its importance. It can therefore be said that just sufficient of an 'implicit Christology' in Jesus must be accepted to believe in the 'explicit Christology' of the early community to act as a vehicle for this bearer of God's presence to make impact in the mind and heart of men and women (Webster 1984:22). In this light, as the gospel is proclaimed, humans will be brought to a point of decision for God and will be able to discover their true identity and their meaning in existence and communion with their fellow beings.

I have now come to the last Christological category called Functional Christology. It was already defined as that type of Christology which finds meaning and significance in Jesus in functional terms rather than in the intricacies of the language of substance and essence. I will now explain in some detail what this Christology is all about.



### **2.3.5 Functional Christology**

In Functional Christology the unique significance of Jesus is not to be sought in something that is before, above, or behind His human reality, as the case is in the Chalcedonian Christology. Rather, Jesus is of unique significance and is named Son of God because He is a human being in a unique, exemplary way. Webster (1984:22) asserts: 'In His human reality He is as it were sacrament, epiphany, manifestation, image, corporeal expression, event, presence of God in the highest and unsurpassable way'.

Webster (1984:23) suggests that functional Christologists would generally feel uncomfortable with Classical or Ontological Christology. Reinhardt has advanced three reasons for this, although many other reasons could be advanced. The first reason is that traditional Christology is essentialist, that is, 'it speculates about the essential constitution of the person of Jesus, and in doing so forgets His significance for the history of salvation' (Reinhardt 1974:346). A second reason is that Classical Christology, by starting 'from above', presupposes a belief in the Trinitarian God and explains the figure of Jesus in terms of an incarnation of the divine Logos. It is argued that such a Christology cannot really arrive 'below' at the history of Jesus of Nazareth. The third reason is the dualistic starting point of traditional Christology with its two-natures doctrine.

It does not matter if one is studying Schleiermacher (1928:374-475) or one of his present followers, the usual characteristic of Functional Christology is that it is approached 'from below' while Jesus is regarded as the true, exemplary, new human being (Webster 1984:23). It should be noted, however, that it is not all Christologies commencing 'from below' which necessarily end up denying the essential divinity of Jesus. Pannenberg, for instance, while developing his Christology 'from below' holds that the ground of Jesus' uniqueness lies in His divinity and divine Sonship (Reinhardt 1974:356).

As opposed to the Chalcedonian Christology, contemporary theology is attempting a number of approaches to throw light on Jesus' uniqueness. Just to mention some: There is the experience of human existence, the experience of the world in its universal

development, and the experience of history. Webster (1984:24) states that Functional Christology is characterised by at least the first two approaches.

Jesus is in the first approach regarded as the Prototype of human existence and He is looked upon as either the example of love and devotion, or as the 'witness of faith' in a godless world, or as one who identified fully with His mission (Webster 1984:24). Just to make it clearer, Jesus is here regarded either as stimulus and example or as the absolute Prototype in whom idea and individual are one. It must be noted, however, that it is doubtful that the unique significance of Jesus can really be maintained by only accepting His exemplary humanity or His human transcendence. Some Christologists have noted that these Christological approaches which regard Jesus' divine Sonship only as an 'expression' of His humanity or see in Jesus the representative of the absent God who vindicates God's cause, because God Himself does not intervene, are inadequate. They note for instance, that while some theologians speak of Jesus as humankind's representative, it does not mean a complete substitution, because in their view, humankind still has an important role to play. Sölle (1967:103, 104) for instance states: 'God, who despite the satisfaction already made, is still not content with the representative, continues to count on us, to wait for us...He is a representative, not a replacement'.

As noted by Webster (1984:25), in the second approach Jesus is regarded as the 'last' Man. Berkhof may be considered as an example of a functional Christologist. He did not hold to the pre-existence of Jesus as believed in the Classical or Ontological Christology. In Webster's view, at best there could be an 'ideal pre-existence' which means that Jesus existed in the mind and planning of God before the creation of the world and before His function as representative of God.

I need to state that other characteristics of Functional Christology regard Jesus in the setting of 'contextual theology' where He is seen as the 'revolutionary', the 'liberator' or the 'political Messiah', or to accept Jesus as the representative of God where Jesus fulfils the role of God without partaking of any supernatural characteristics, or even as the revelation of God without, however, partaking of His essential essence of being (Webster

1984:25). Latin America gives us an example of a 'contextual Christology': Sobrino (1978:13) avers, 'In Latin America Christology is in fact being worked out by comparing the present-day situation with the historical Jesus. Latin American faithful see that as the best way to give expression to their Christian faith'.

Another scholar who argues from a functional perspective is Oscar Cullmann, who wrote *The Christology of the New Testament* (Cullmann 1963). In his view, Functional Christology is the only kind that exists. He asserts:

Because the first Christians see God's redemptive revelation in Jesus, for them it is his very nature that he can be known in his work – fundamentally in the central work accomplished in the flesh. Therefore, in the light of the New Testament witness, all mere speculation about his natures is absurdity. Functional Christology is the only kind which exists (Cullmann 1963:326).

In any serious consideration of Functional Christology, it is important to not neglect the important works of Edward Schillebeeckx, the Roman Catholic theologian. Schillebeeckx suggests that the starting point of any Christological reflection is the Man Jesus. His *Jesus an Experiment in Christology* (Schillebeeckx 1979) and *Christ the Christian Experience in the Modern World* (Schillebeeckx 1980) are works that probably have a permanent place in Christological debates.

A survey of Christological thought reveals that Functional Christology was very attractive to the modern mind of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was able to discard many of the Hellenistic concepts thought to be existent in the classical formulations of traditional Christology (Webster 1984:26). Since in Functional Christology Jesus can remain fully human, supernatural and metaphysical explanations for His mission become unnecessary. The emphasis in Functional Christology, therefore, is that God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ as His revelation, His partner, His representative and His ideal man – and this man becomes the leader, example, pattern, and model for all humankind. Thus, the life that He lived and the faith that He manifested can be revealed by others who show the same

faith in God. His human achievement is a trailblazer for all humanity, and if others would rely on divine power as He did, the results would be the same. It is Webster's contention that in Functional Christology it is thought that the life of Jesus Christ could be re-duplicated a thousand times by those imbued with His Spirit and by those following His footsteps. Functional Christology appealed to the reason of modern man in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and met the scientific and evolutionary concepts of that time. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not uncommon to stumble upon Christologists who subscribe to Functional Christology.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the historical perspective to general Christology. It has focused on the Christological categories that have shaped the history of Christology. The five classifications (Ontological Christology, Speculative Christology, 'History of Jesus' Christology, Existential Christology, and Functional Christology) remain only one attempt to categorise Christology. Although it is possible to argue that Christological debates in the first five to six centuries were basically ontological, what seems to be the case is that these Christological categories tend to overlap into the periods that belong to the others. Thus, it is possible that the three Christologists, selected for this study, who are 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Christologists, fall into one or more of the five Christological categories.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:**  
**SUGGESTED CHRISTOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM**  
**OF THE TWO NATURES IN THE PERSON OF JESUS**  
**(1<sup>ST</sup> TO 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)**

**3.1 Introduction**

In chapter 2, I gave a historical perspective to general Christology. In this chapter, I review the various suggested solutions to the Christological problem of the relationship between the natures of Jesus, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several Christological models have competed for recognition outside the NT, beginning in the 1<sup>st</sup> century of the Christian Church. These theories have actually been formulated in an attempt to solve or explain the problem of the relation of the natures in the Person of Jesus. Jesus has in the history of Christology been viewed as either more divine than human or more human than divine. In other words, some Christological models have leaned more towards Jesus' divinity than His humanity, while other Christological models have leaned more towards His humanity than His divinity. In some cases, Jesus has been regarded as being divine and not human, while in other cases He has been viewed as being human and not divine. Other attempts have also been made at solving the problem of how the two natures in Jesus related, which need to be reviewed. It must be noted that the early Christological models were basically ontological. Thus, in this chapter, I will review these ontological Christological models.

**3.2 'More Divine' and 'More Human' Models of Jesus' Nature**

The early attempts at solving the problem of the natures in the Person of Jesus resulted in the formulation of Christological models that regarded Jesus as either more divine than human, or more human than divine.

### 3.2.1 Jesus was more Divine than Human

Under this heading, I will look at Modalistic Monarchianism, Monophysitism, Docetism, Apathartodocetism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, and Apollinarianism.

#### 3.2.1.1 Modalistic Monarchianism

According to Gulley (2012:515), the term *Monarchian* comes from two Greek terms 'mono' (one) and 'arche' (ruler). Thus, the Monarchians only considered God the Father as sovereign. They totally rejected the idea that there are three Gods (tritheism). The proponents of this teaching, especially those in the West, rejected the teaching that there is a personal distinctiveness of a divine Son and the Holy Spirit in contrast to the first Person of the Godhead, referred to in the Bible as God the Father (Blaising 2001:784). There was not, in their view, such a thing as a God who exists as three Persons. There is only one God.

There are basically two kinds of Monarchianism, namely Modalistic – which I will now present – and Dynamic Monarchianism, which I will discuss later. The Christologists who subscribed to Monarchianism can be distinguished in this way: The Modalistic followers considered Jesus to be more divine than human, while the Dynamic group considered Him to be more human than divine (Gulley 2012:516).

Modalism is a late 2<sup>nd</sup>-century doctrine (Von Harnack 1961:166), holding that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are only 'masks' or instances of the one God and not three distinct Persons or realities within God (Deist 1984:148; McGrath 2013:359; Oliver & Oliver 2019:3 of 12; Williams 2011:1539). Thus, Modalism should be regarded as teaching that Jesus was basically divine, because it denies the humanity of the God-Man, asserting that the one who suffered was not a human being in the person of a human Jesus, but the Father Himself (cf. Gulley 2012:516; Schaff 1885i:757; Williams 2011:1539). This teaching is known as *Patripassianism*. It can thus be argued that Modalism was monotheistic and rejected the functional distinctions in the Trinity. Tertullian was the first to use the term 'Monarchianism'. He used it for the purpose of protecting the monarchy of God. Modalistic Monarchianism is often referred to as Sabellianism (Blaising

2001:784), named after the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Sabellius, who was its best-known exponent. Note should be made however, that the first proponent of Modalism was Noetus of Smyrna during the last decade of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century (Kelly 1978:120). Another exponent of Modalistic Monarchianism was Praxeas. Hippolytus observes that Noetus alleged that Christ was in fact the Father Himself, that the Father was also born, and that He suffered on the cross (Marcovich 1986:403; Williams 2011:1540). What is clear about Sabellius' theology is that he denied the Trinity. Therefore, it was stated that the Sabellian Trinity 'has no real distinction of persons' (Schaff 1885d:210).

According to Blaising (2001:785), Sabellius taught that God was one being and merely manifested Himself at different times in the forms which Christian theologians call the three Persons of the Godhead. In other words, there are not three distinct Persons, but one Person, who manifests Himself in three different forms. The suggestion here is that God has the ability to exist in these three modes of being sequentially, but not concurrently. He simply takes the form of the Father, then takes the form of the Son, and finally takes the form of the Holy Spirit – therefore only one God who takes different forms at different times.

Objecting to this theory, Gulley (2012:516) makes some important observations based on the testimony of Scripture. He observes that Jesus' prayer to the Father (John 17) suggests that the Father and the Son existed concurrently. He further observes that when Jesus Christ was baptised, the Spirit of God came down from heaven and alighted on Him, and God spoke about Him being His Son in whom He was well pleased. This, in his view, is a clear indication that there were three Persons present at the same time (Matt 3:13-17), suggesting that the Godhead comprises of three Persons, and not one. Gulley argues that an analysis of this theory reveals clearly that it does not provide for the biblical doctrine of the incarnation in which the Father and the Holy Spirit participated (John 3:16; Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35) and there was not such a thing as Jesus' dependence upon His Father and the Holy Spirit during His earthly life as the God-Man. This theory also suggests that when Jesus died, the universe was left without anyone to run it and there was no God to raise Jesus from His grave (Acts 2:32).

According to Gulley (2012:517), it can be argued that Modalism does not allow for the biblical post-resurrection ministry of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly sanctuary where He intercedes with the Father on our behalf (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), who sends the third Person of the Godhead (John 3:16, 17), the Holy Spirit, from the Father to believers (Acts 2:33) and bestows spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1-11, 27-31; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:1-3, 7-8) for various ministries in the body of Jesus. In order for Jesus to perform His heavenly ministry in the sanctuary, it takes the biblical Trinity to enable Him, just as it did for Him to perform His earthly ministry. In the theory of Modalism, it is not possible to think of Jesus as being a King-Priest at the right hand of the Father in a joint rule. Thus, Sabellianism contradicts those NT statements that assert that after His resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and now ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (cf. e.g. Heb 8:1-6).

Modalism, in the form taught by Sabellius, will occupy my attention again in the debates leading to Nicaea and the formulation of the Nicene creed. For now, I will proceed to look at Monophysitism.

### **3.2.1.2 Monophysitism**

In Monophysitism, it was taught that Jesus Christ had only one nature, because it was believed that the divine in Jesus Christ transformed the human, making Jesus fully divine, thus not human (Latourette 1997:172). This theory was taught by people who were known as the Monophysites, the 'one-nature' people (Hill 2006:98). It was mainly propagated by Eutyches and Dioscurus.

Some objections have been made to this theory. Gulley (2012:517), for instance, observes that the implication of this theory is that Jesus Christ lived on earth as God, rather than as a human being, whereas the Bible clearly teaches that He lived on earth as a human being. It follows, therefore, that if Jesus Christ lived on earth as God, then the biblical testimony that He died on Calvary's cross is a fabrication, since God cannot die, as He is immortal. Thus, this theory does not allow for a substitutionary atonement, which, however, most scholars believe is clearly taught in Scripture. It has also been



argued that if Jesus Christ lived on earth as God, then He did not really set an example for believers to follow, for believers needed a human example to look to in their struggle with temptation. This theory will appear again in the debates leading to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. Another theory that suggests that Jesus was only divine, is Docetism.

### **3.2.1.3 Docetism**

The term *Docetism* comes from the Greek verb *dokeo* (to seem; to appear) (Gulley 2012:517). The term refers to the humanity of Jesus: He was not really human, but He just appeared to be human. It can thus be argued that Docetism denied the humanity of Jesus. In this regard, Docetists have it hard to respond satisfactorily to the question: If Jesus was not really human, did He really get tempted and suffer? The Docetists assume that Jesus' divinity was not touched by suffering. However, since the Bible suggests that Jesus suffered, they opined that the only suffering He experienced was through His apparent humanity. The heretical group called Docetists were people who distinguished Jesus of Nazareth from Christ, and alleged that Christ did not suffer, but remained impassible – it was Jesus who suffered (Schaff 1885a:428).

For Tertullian, any suffering by an apparent humanity needed to be rejected on the following basis: '[T]he sufferings of Christ will be found not to warrant faith in him. For he suffered nothing who did not truly suffer; and a phantom could not truly suffer. God's entire work, therefore, is subverted. Christ's death...is denied' (Schaff 1885b:328).

McGrath (1994:282) concludes that among Docetists, the 'sufferings of Christ are thus treated as apparent rather than real'. 'Apparent suffering' was an idea with which Gnostics were comfortable, for they taught that there is a gulf between the Creator and the creature and this can only be bridged by a descending order of beings, which become ever more human, and ever less divine as they got closer to the realm of humans. It has thus been suggested that this was apparent incarnation, for it was not the true incarnation that the Bible clearly teaches. Cerinthus, Ebion, Marcion, and Valentinus were Docetists (Macleod 1998:157). From Docetism, I will turn to Aphantodocetism.

#### **3.2.1.4 Aphartodocetism**

According to Gulley (2012:518), Aphartodocetism is a type of Monophysitism promoted by Emperor Julian, the Apostate (332-363), son of Julius Constantius. In this view, it was taught that because Jesus Christ was divine, He experienced no change through His incarnation and His birth through Mary. It was argued that Jesus was incorruptible, incapable of suffering, and was incapable of natural passions. Thus, His humanity was severely limited (Latourette 1997:282).

It is apparent that, in Aphartodocetism, we have a Jesus who is more divine than human; we have a Jesus who was incapable of natural human passions. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, another teaching known as Nestorianism occupied the minds of some theologians and Christians.

#### **3.2.1.5 Nestorianism**

It has been suggested that Nestorius (5<sup>th</sup> century) may not have taught the doctrine named after him, but it was taught by his followers (Gulley 2012:518). At the centre of the controversy was the term *theotokos* (God-bearing), which was used in regard to Mary. The question at issue was: Was Mary the mother only of Jesus (human nature), or was she also the mother of God (divine nature)? Nestorius thought the term was appropriate if one used the term *anthropotokos* (human-bearing). As a matter of fact, Nestorius actually preferred the term *Christotokos* (Christ-bearing). It was Nestorius' fear that if the term *theotokos* were used, it would lead to either Arianism (Jesus not equal to God) or Apollinarianism (Jesus not a real man). Cyril of Alexandria considered that Nestorianism taught a moral union of two natures, rather than a real union. Another way to put it is that Jesus was actually two Persons – a view rejected by both Nestorius and the Council of Ephesus (431 AD). What must be borne in mind is that *theotokos*, as understood in Alexandria, was equivalent to *communicatio idiomatum*, or the interchange of properties – the divine with the human and the human with the divine, and hence one Person. Kärkkäinen (2003:76-77) observes that this was the view of the Eastern Church.

I will refer to Nestorianism again in the debates leading to the Council of Chalcedon. I will now discuss Eutychianism.

### 3.2.1.6 Eutychianism

The Christological theory known as Eutychianism came as a reaction to the Eastern Church's view of Nestorianism. The Western church declared that Jesus had two natures before the incarnation and only one nature after the incarnation (Gulley 2012:518). The actual meaning of this was that the two natures were united without confusion (or without the *communicatio idiomatum*). There is a need to note, nevertheless, that this unity meant that Jesus Christ's human nature was absorbed by His divine nature, implying that He was only God. But the Council of Constantinople (448 AD) rejected this view, and yet the 'Robber Council' in Ephesus (449 AD) reinstated the view of Eutyches. The final decision, however, would come at Chalcedon (Kärkkäinen 2003:75), which I will refer to in chapter 4.

Pope Leo the Great, bishop of Rome, opposed the idea that Jesus Christ only had one nature after the incarnation, stating that Eutyches failed to see that a human nature existed in Him, evidenced either by His mortality or the glory of His resurrection (Schaff 1885g:257). In other words, the fact that Jesus Christ was mortal, acted as clear evidence that He possessed a human nature. Only human beings die and rise from the grave. Cyril, in his letter to John of Antioch, taught the 'union of two natures' and opposed a 'mingling or mixture' of the two. Cyril's opposition to those who thought 'a shadow of change could occur concerning the Nature of the Word of God', can be expressed as follows:

[H]e remains that which he always was, and has not been changed, nor can he ever be changed, nor is he capable of change. For we all confess in addition to this, that the Word of God is impassible... To the same purpose the all-wise Peter also said when he wrote of Christ as having 'suffered in the flesh', and not in the nature of his ineffable godhead. In order that he should be believed to be Saviour of all, by an economic appropriation to himself, as just said, he assumed the sufferings of his own Flesh (Schaff 1885h:252).

In the debates leading to the Council of Chalcedon, I will consider Eutychianism again. In what follows, I will briefly occupy myself with Apollinarianism.

### **3.2.1.7 Apollinarianism**

Apollinaris was a Laodicean. He was concerned about the *Logos* taking full humanity, for that would mean, in his view, that the *Logos* would be contaminated, which could mean that Jesus was not sinless. He therefore suggested that the human mind in Jesus was replaced by the divine mind, assuring that Jesus would be sinless (Gulley 2012:519). It has been observed that this view was meant to protect Jesus Christ's full divinity, but it actually questioned His full humanity (Kärkkäinen 2003:73-74).

As it was noted above, some theories of the nature of Jesus suggest that He was more human than divine. Such theories include Dynamic Monarchianism, Ebionitism, Gnosticism, Arianism, and Socinianism. In what follows I turn to these theories.

## **3.2.2 Jesus being more Human than Divine**

In reviewing the theories of the nature of Jesus that suggest that He was more human than divine, I will follow the pattern I followed when reviewing the theories that suggest that He was more divine than human.

### **3.2.2.1 Dynamic Monarchianism**

The term 'dynamic' stems from the Greek term *dunamis* (power). Thus, Dynamic Monarchianism holds that God's presence was in Jesus in such a powerful way that Jesus was different from any other human being, but He was never God, only close to being God (Gulley 2012:519). In the view of Theodotus of Byzantine, the so-called dynamic presence of God filled Jesus Christ when He was baptised. Dynamic Monarchianism is also known as Adoptionism, which teaches that the adoption of Jesus Christ by God, the Father, took place either at His baptism or resurrection. It must be noted that Paul of Samosata denied that 'the Word [*Logos*] was God' (John 1:1), for the Word was merely the dynamic presence of God. As reported by Kärkkäinen (2003:67-69) and Latourette (1997:143-145), this view was condemned at the Council of Antioch in 268 AD. Another

theory of the nature of Jesus suggesting that He was more human than divine is Ebionitism.

### **3.2.2.2 Ebionitism**

According to Gully (2012:520), the Ebionites were a Jewish sect, and their name is a Hebrew term that can be translated as 'the poor ones'. Committed to the *shema* of the Hebrew people, 'Hear, o Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!' (Deut 6:4), they said that there can only be one God. Jesus Christ could therefore not be God as well. By this, they rejected the idea that He was divine, holding instead that He remained merely a son of Joseph and Mary, fully human, even though He became the Messiah at His baptism. It would appear that Adoptionism was read into the text, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you' (Ps 2:7). Therefore, the argument was that, because Jesus was a mere man adopted by God, 'His death had no salvific significance' (Schwartz 1998:149). Ebionites embodied the legalism of the NT Pharisees and succeeded the Judaizers that were opposed by the apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians (Gulley 2012:20). It was for this reason that they opposed Paul, considering him 'an apostate and heretic' (Schaff 1962:433). There is historical evidence that the Ebionites 'persisted, as small minorities, until at least the latter part of the fourth century and perhaps much longer' (Latourette 1997:122). Gnosticism is another theory of the nature of Jesus suggesting that He was more human than divine.

### **3.2.2.3 Gnosticism**

Gnostics argue that *gnosis* is enlightenment or saving knowledge. What this amounts to, in their view, is that salvation is not through a saviour, but through knowledge. This belief is popular in Eastern religions, but it was an early heresy against which the apologists Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius wrote (Gulley 2012:520). It must be noted that Gnosticism was a 'combination of Greek philosophy and Christianity' (Borchert 2001:485). There were other critics of Gnosticism between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, including Augustine, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen (Geisler 1999:274-275).

Objecting to this theory, Gulley (2012:521) notes that an analysis of Gnosticism reveals that it presents a dualism between spirit and matter (good and evil) with the 'God' of the OT being less than the 'God' of the NT. It teaches that creation resulted from the fall of *Sophia* (Wisdom). Thus, the Gnostic redeemer was not really human, and he did not die on a cross. Salvation, according to Gnosticism, was a secret *gnosis* (knowledge) that the Gnostic 'God' communicated through the redeemer after his resurrection. In their eschatological orientation, Gnostics look forward to a time when they will escape from the body and get reunited with 'God'. They long to leave the physical body and become only a spirit. I now turn to Arianism.

#### **3.2.2.4 Arianism**

Arianism is a theory named after its ardent exponent, Arius. He was born around 250 AD in North Africa. In his view, the Supreme Being was God, the Father, rather than the Trinity. God, the Father, could not communicate His essence to another being like Jesus (Keith 1988:42). Thus, Arianism rejected the equality of Jesus to the Father, for the Father alone was self-existent, having no dependence upon anyone but Himself for His existence. Arius opined, by contrast, that Jesus originated from the Father in a subordinationist sense, therefore being dependent upon the Father for His existence. He placed this dependence way back in eternity, but that did not alter the fact that there was a kind of Creator-creature relationship between the Father and Jesus (Gulley 2012:521). The best that Jesus is, according to Arius, is that He was created to be ranked 'first among the creatures' (cf. McGrath 2013:56). It has thus been observed that in Arius' view, Jesus was not divine in the sense of being a co-equal Person in the eternal Trinity. There was an ontological distinction between the Father and the Son, implying that Jesus could not save humans since only God can do that.

There is a need to note that if the Father is understood as fully timeless, the Son and the Spirit can thereupon be allowed their biblical roles, the implication of this being that the Son and the Spirit would be temporal and, in this respect, would be considered ontologically below the Father. Apologists from Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) to Origen (ca. 185-254) built and worked within a subordinationist theological structure. What could be

said, in Arius' view, was that because the *Logos* (Word) originated from the Father, He would not be 'utterly timeless' like the Father, because He had an origin in Him, which would be temporal and subordinate (Jenson 1997:96-97). Arius, as it will be seen later, played a big role in the debates that led to the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

There is need to observe however, that Arius met a challenger in the person of Athanasius, who gave a rebuttal to his Christology (cf. chapter 4). Thus, he played a big role in the debates that led to the Council in Nicaea in 325 AD. In 321 AD, Alexander arranged a meeting in Alexandria and excommunicated Arius and his followers (Isichei 1995:23; Schaff 1894:34). In 336 AD, Arius died in Constantinople, a 'broken, and largely forgotten man' (Isichei 1995:24), only after the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great in 395 AD did the influence of Arianism fade (Oliver & Oliver 2019:5 of 12). I will close this discussion by briefly looking at Socinianism.

### **3.2.2.5 Socinianism**

Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), an Italian, opposed the Trinity, and he later became leader of the Anabaptist Unitarian sect in Poland (Gulley 2012:521). In his view, Scripture should be interpreted rationally. He therefore denied the divinity of Jesus, saying that He did not become God until after His resurrection. Socinus rejected the substitutionary atonement of Jesus on Calvary's cross, arguing that the Father is able to forgive sin without requiring sacrifice. Later Unitarian movements trace their roots to the views of Socinus (Kubricht 2001:1122).

## **3.3 Other Suggested Solutions to the Problem of the Relation of the Natures of Jesus**

Apart from the attempts at resolving the problem of the two natures in Jesus discussed above, which focused on either Jesus' divinity or humanity, other attempts were made. Four attempts or strategies are representative: 1) The idea that it was the man Jesus of Nazareth who became God, and not *vice versa* (Adoptionism); 2) the idea that the divine being, God, took on impersonal humanity rather than an individual human personality (Anhypostatic Christology); 3) the idea that the second Person of the Trinity exchanged

His deity for humanity (kenoticism); and 4) the idea that the incarnation was the power of God present in a human being (the doctrine of dynamic incarnation). These models are not completely different from the ones discussed above. As discussed below, they are related to some of those reviewed above.

### **3.3.1 Adoptionism**

In its simplest terms, Adoptionism is the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was merely a human being during the early years of His life, but was at some point, probably at His baptism (or perhaps resurrection), 'adopted' by God as His Son (cf. Erickson 2013:666). Whether this adoption was an act of pure grace on the part of God, or a promotion in status for which Jesus had qualified by virtue of His personal attributes, it was more a case of a human becoming God than that of God becoming human (Ottley 1896:151-161).

In support of their position, adoptionists advance the scriptural idea that Jesus was begotten by God (Erickson 2013:667), which they interpret to mean that God gave the status of Son to Him. He is referred to as the 'only begotten' (μονογενής; John 3:16). However, when did this 'begetting' take place? Adoptionists point out that the author of the letter to the Hebrews twice quoted Psalm 2:7, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you', and applies it to the Son of God, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:5; 5:5). They note the considerable similarity between this statement and that of the Father at Jesus' baptism: 'You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Mark 1:11). It is thus assumed that the Spirit's descent upon the Son at this point represents the coming of deity upon the man, Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, it is suggested that God, the Father, adopted Jesus Christ when He was baptised, since it was then that He was declared God's Son.

In objecting to the theory of Adoptionism, Erickson (2013:667) states that it gives the human Jesus an independent status, which is not supported by the Scriptures, since the Bible suggests that Jesus had two natures right from the incarnation (Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 8:58; Phil 2:5-8). The theory of Adoptionism implies that Jesus Christ would simply have lived on as Jesus of Nazareth if the special adoption by God had not occurred. As such, Adoptionism was more a matter of God's entering an existent human



being than of a true incarnation as the Bible suggests. This event is sometimes regarded as unique to the life of Jesus. Sometimes it is compared to the adoption of other human beings as children of God.

According to Hauck (1908:48-50), Adoptionism has recurred at different times during the long history of the Christian religion. It must be observed, however, that scholars who are serious about the full teaching of God's word are not ignorant of the major obstacles to Adoptionism, which include the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, the narrative of Jesus' pre-birth, and His birth from a virgin woman (Erickson 2013:667).

### **3.3.2 Anhypostatic Christology**

Anhypostatic Christology is another attempt to clarify the relationship between the two natures in Jesus. Erickson (2013:667) asserts that this view insists that the humanity of Jesus was impersonal and had no independent subsistence. What this implies is that the divine Word was not united with an individual human person. Anhypostatic Christology was at its inception meant to serve as a protective shield against Nestorianism, which divided Jesus Christ into two Persons and the related teaching that Mary was mother of Jesus, but not of God. This Christology also served to negate Adoptionism, in which it was taught that Jesus as a human being with independent existence was elevated to deity. The major point of Anhypostatic Christology is that the man Jesus Christ had no subsistence apart from the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity. It supports this thesis by denying that Jesus had any individual human personality (Barth 1936:149-150).

Objecting to this Christological model, Erickson (2013:667) observes that Anhypostatic Christology is problematic because thinking that Jesus was not a specific human individual, suggests that the divine Word that became flesh literally united with the entire race of humanity – an idea that in his view is absurd. In fact, Erickson does admit that we occasionally say that Jesus is united with the entire human race, but in his view, we do so figuratively on the grounds of basic characteristics shared by all its members. When Christologists say that the divine Word united with the whole human race, they do not have a literal physical union in mind. Thus, it would appear that in attempting to avoid one

heresy, Anhypostatic Christology falls into another. Anhypostatic Christologists do not seem to realise that their insistence that Jesus is personal only in His divine dimension, excludes something vital from His humanity. They do not realise that denying the individual humanness of Jesus Christ suggests that He was predominantly divine, and that links it to Apollinarianism as discussed above (cf. Baillie 1948:92-93).

### **3.3.3 Kenoticism**

While some Christologists have found a solution to the problem of the relation of the natures of Jesus in Adoptionism and Anhypostatic Christology, others, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have argued that the key to understanding the incarnation is to be found in the expression '[Jesus] made Himself of no reputation' (Erickson 2013:668). In this view, God emptied Himself of His divine form (μορφῆ θεοῦ). In other words, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside the independent use of His divine attributes (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and others) and instead took on human qualities. This view suggests that the incarnation was God's act in which the second Person of the Godhead exchanged His divine attributes for human characteristics. In this exchange, His moral qualities, such as love and mercy were maintained. This may seem like an act of the Son alone; however, kenotic Christologists argue that it actually involved God, the Father (and God, the Holy Spirit) as well. Thus, God, the Father (and God, the Holy Spirit), in sending forth the Son, was like a human father who sent his son to the mission field, but instead of staying at home to wait for a report of victory, a part of Him went with the Son as well (Gore 1891:172).

Some Christologists have raised objections to this Christological model. Erickson (2013: 668), for instance, observes that a critical analysis of Kenotic Christology shows that there is a parallel in the realm of Christology to the solution offered by Modalistic Monarchianism to the understanding of the Trinity: Jesus Christ was not God and man simultaneously, but successively. Thus, with respect to certain attributes, He was God, then He was human, then He is God again. This implies that the solution to the problem of the natures of Jesus is to maintain that Jesus is God and a human being in the same respect, but not at the same time. It must be observed, nevertheless, that in Erickson's view, while this

Christological model solves some of the difficulty, it does not take into account the clear Scriptural teaching that Jesus is both God and a human being in verity. Thus, the indications of an apparent continuing incarnation of the second Person of the Godhead militate against the maintenance of this theory, innovative though it may be.

### **3.3.4 The Doctrine of Dynamic Incarnation**

The Doctrine of Dynamic Incarnation is another suggested solution to the problem of the relation of the natures of Jesus Christ. This doctrine holds that the incarnation should be thought of as God's power being actively present within the Person of Jesus instead of that His presence in the divine-human Jesus was a personal hypostatic union between the second Person of the Trinity and an individual human being, Jesus of Nazareth (Erickson 2013:668).

It has been argued that a close analysis of this view reveals something interesting: It resembles Dynamic Monarchianism, where it is taught that God's power entered into the individual, Jesus of Nazareth, at some point in His life. This suggests that the incarnation was not the individual, Jesus of Nazareth, being united with God in some kind of hypostatic union, but an indwelling in Him of God's power (Erickson 2013:668-669). Thus, it was not that Jesus Christ had two natures, but that God's power dwelt in Him.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a form of this view is to be found in Donald Baillie's *God Was in Christ* (Baillie 1948). Baillie bases his theology on 2 Corinthians 5:19: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'. Instead of saying, 'Christ was God', this verse emphasises that 'God was in Christ'. Thus, it is argued that Jesus Christ was not God, but a human being in whom the presence of God was.

Baillie explains the paradox of the incarnation by using the model of God's indwelling in the believer in what is called the paradox of grace. Thus, when the believer does the right thing or makes the right choice, they typically say: 'It was not me, but God that did it'. According to Baillie (1948:117), in Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 2:12-13, Paul refers to

the internal working of God. Baillie's statements imply that the incarnation of Jesus is actually an instance, albeit the most complete one, of the paradox of indwelling grace:

This paradox in its fragmentary form in our own Christian lives is a reflection of that perfect union of God and man in the incarnation on which our whole Christian life depends, and may therefore be our best clue to the understanding of it. In the New Testament we see the man in whom God was incarnate surpassing all other men in refusing to claim anything for Himself independently and ascribing all goodness to God (Baillie1948:117).

Christologists such as Erickson have raised objections to this interpretation, which suggests that the difference between Jesus and us is only quantitative, not qualitative. It must, however, be noted that this interpretation does not agree with several NT statements, such as: the fullness (πλήρωμα) of God dwelling in Jesus bodily (Col. 2:9); the pre-existence of Jesus (John 1:18; 8:58); and the uniqueness of His sonship (μονογενής; John 3:16). While the doctrine of dynamic incarnation lessens the tension suggested by the Chalcedonian formula, it encounters difficulty because of its implicit reduction of the deity (Erickson 2013:669).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

From the foregoing review, it is evident that the debate on how the two natures in Jesus related, has indeed troubled theological minds for centuries. The early debates relating to this Christological problem were ontological in nature. Various solutions were suggested, but they proved to be inadequate. Some tended to emphasise the divinity of Jesus at the expense of His humanity, while others tended to emphasise His humanity at the expense of His divinity. This explains why there are no end to debates and new solutions on this subject.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE DEBATES LEADING TO THE NICENE AND CHALCEDONIAN CREEDS (1<sup>ST</sup> TO 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In chapter 3, I gave a historical overview of various attempts that Christologists made from the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century to resolve the debate on the two natures in Jesus. I did not specifically refer to the aspect of how the Christian Church as a whole handled the issue. The question about the mystery of the relationship between the divine and human natures in Jesus was not resolved by the Christian Church until the two landmark councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. The first official council (Nicaea) was preceded by Christological debates that spanned 300 years. It took another 125 years to arrive at the second solution (Chalcedon). In this chapter, I review the Christological debates that led to the two landmark Christological councils. The aim of the chapter is to provide a context for a critical evaluation of the Christological views of Sequeira, Erickson, and Gulley. It must be noted that the period covered fits within the period reviewed in chapter 3. It is thus treated separately in this chapter because of the crucial place it occupies in the history of Christology, and also because it is a period in which the united Christian Church debated Jesus' Person.

#### **4.2 The Debates Leading to Nicaea (325) and the Nicene Creed**

Outside the NT, the first official statement regarding the nature of Jesus Christ was formulated at the first official church council called by Emperor Constantine in Nicaea in 325 AD. Constantine himself attended the council, together with about 318 bishops, who, according to Hill (2006:80), were mostly drawn from the Greek-speaking half of the Roman Empire. It was been opined that Constantine called this council for political reasons, namely that he wanted to unite the Christians who he had expected to be his allies after his alleged conversion to Christianity, who, to his surprise, were now engaged in Christological controversy (Placher & Nelson 2013:61). Whether Constantine had by

this time really converted to Christianity or not, is not a debate for this present study. Of concern is the role he played in the Nicene Council. The Christological debates among his subjects disturbed him because he viewed them as a threat to the unity of his empire. In other words, while the council was religious in nature and purpose, it served a political agenda for Constantine.

What were the issues leading to Nicaea? It has been suggested that at the time, most Christians believed that Jesus Christ was not only divine, but also human. However, the question seems to have been whether Jesus was simply the one God of heaven that adherents of the Christian religion believed in (Placher & Nelson 2013:59). Was Jesus identical to the Father? In other words, was God one Person who simply manifested Himself differently at different times? Was Jesus the same as the Father, who incarnated, and when He incarnated, was there no one remaining in heaven, or was God more than two Persons? If God was more than two Persons, did Christians then worship more Gods than what they claimed was the case? In other words, were they polytheistic?

At about 200 AD, Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius, who were noted theologians living in Rome, proposed that there was no God but Jesus Christ, and that when He incarnated, it meant that no one remained in heaven. As a result of this teaching, they were greatly opposed, since the NT seems to indicate that there are two other Persons in heaven, who can be referred to as God. In other words, the three theologians did not believe that there was another personality who could be identified as God apart from Jesus Christ, for the Bible did not know any God, but Jesus Christ. The three theologians did not think of God as being three distinct Persons, as Christians today think of Him.

Since the three theologians were convinced that the OT and NT taught that Jesus Christ was the only God of heaven, when Noetus was opposed, he observed that he did not know what evil he was committing in glorifying Him by calling Him God (Schaff 1885c:223, 224). He was surprised that while He proclaimed Jesus Christ as God, fellow Christians who should have rejoiced with him, were looking at him as a heretic. He claimed that he was willing to make his belief in Jesus Christ as the only God of both the Old and New

Testaments, the subject of suffering, for in his view, Jesus Christ was God in the highest sense of the title the NT gave Him. In his view, if at all there was heresy being propagated, it definitely was not being propagated by him, but by the people who were opposing him. Thus, he thought that his cause was worth dying for. He argued that either Jesus Christ was the only God of the Bible, or there was no God at all. However, a number of Noetus' contemporaries told him what was wrong with his Christology: They told him that the Sabellians, just like him, contradicted the clear teaching of the Word of God on the subject of the Godhead (Placher & Nelson 2013:59). They made it clear to him that his Christology did not cohere with Scripture.

About a 100 years later, Hilary of Poitiers responded to Sabellianism by arguing that the NT frequently speaks of Jesus Christ as the Son of God in whom He was pleased (Placher & Nelson 2013:59). Jesus Christ told the Jewish people that God, the Father, is greater than Him (John 14:28). After His resurrection, He told Mary that He was going to His Father (John 20:17). He gave thanks to His Father (John 11:41). The NT suggests that Jesus is not identical with the Father (John 3:16). In other words, if Jesus is God, then there is at least more than one Person in the Godhead. It was thus wrong for Noetus to insist that the only God of the NT was Jesus Christ.

Hilary made it clear that the NT repeatedly distinguished between God, the Father and God, the Son. The distinction that the NT made between God, the Father and God, the Son suggested that Jesus could not be identical with the Father. This conclusion, however, leads back to the question: If Jesus is divine but is not the Father, are there then two Gods? How do we account for the OT declaration that there is only one God, as indicated in Deuteronomy 6:4? How do we interpret texts such as Isaiah 9:6, where the future child to be born would be called 'everlasting Father'?

It was Tertullian who, after a close study of the NT, suggested a solution to this debate. He found his solution in a series of metaphors. In his view, God, the Father sent forth the Word in much the same way that the root puts forth the tree, and the fountain the river, and the sun the ray (Placher & Nelson 2013:59).

Tertullian argues:

For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise, the sun and the ray are two forms, but coherent ones. Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated (Schaff 1885b:603).

Based on these metaphors, Tertullian argued that we could distinguish between Father and Son, just as we can distinguish between the sun and the ray of light flowing from it, but they are not two separate things. After stating the relationships that exist between the root and tree, the fountain and river, and the sun and its rays, Tertullian concluded that everything which proceeds from something else is second from it, without necessarily being separated (Schaff 1885b:603).

It was thought that Tertullian's explanation recognised the NT distinction between God, the Father, and God, the Son, without leading to a belief in two Gods. It has been suggested that an objection is that these metaphors, used by Origen and many other authors as well, contained a hidden problem. Therefore, critically analysed, Tertullian's metaphor of the sun and its rays, implies that if God, the Father, was the sun and Jesus merely one ray coming out of the sun, then Jesus was clearly subordinate to the Father (Placher & Nelson 2013:59). Interestingly, Tertullian admitted that God, the Father, is the entire substance, while God, the Son, is a derivation and portion of the whole (Schaff 1885b:603-604). He suggested that the statement, 'My Father is greater than I', which Jesus made (John 14:28), supports this conclusion. In other words, while acknowledging Jesus as God, Tertullian argued that He was a derivation from God, the Father, and hence, He was subordinate to Him.

At first it appeared that Tertullian had resolved the debate of how Jesus related to God, the Father. In other words, Jesus was God in the sense of being a derivation from God, the Father. He was a subordinate God. It was only when Arius (ca. 250-336 AD) came up



with a theory that suggested that Jesus was not identical to God, the Father, that it became clear that Tertullian had not resolved the problem, but rather complicated it. Arius, a priest living in Alexandria around 300 AD, has gone into Christian historical records as a heretic, whose arguments led to the Council of Nicaea and the subsequent formulation of the Nicene creed (Placher & Nelson 2013:60). In his arguments, Arius wanted to make it clear that God, the Son, is not identical to God, the Father. In doing this, he argued that only the Father was eternal – the Son was subordinate to the Father and was created at some point. In other words, the Son was not God in the sense that the OT and NT suggested the Father is. The Son is God in a subordinate sense. He is not self-existent as the Father is. Jesus Christ was a created being, probably elevated to the status of God by God, the Father.

The *Letter of Alexander* quoted in Socrates (Schaff 1885e:4) summarises Arius' position quite clearly: Arius argued that the Word of God did not exist from eternity, but God made Him out of nothing. In other words, in Arius' view, there was a time when the Word of God did not exist. This, according to Arius, is because God's Son is a creature and a work of God's own hands. This implies, in Arius' opinion, that Jesus is neither like God, the Father, regarding His essence, nor is He by nature God's true Word or wisdom. The point of Arius' argument is that Jesus is one of God's works and creatures, of course of a very high order in all of God's created works.

Arius has put his Christological theory on the table of theological debate in a manner that suggested that he had a genius for propaganda. It was not difficult for him to influence half of the population of Alexandria (Placher & Nelson 2013:60). In easy fashion, he has set his favourite slogan to a popular tune: 'There was a time when the Son was not' (Placher & Nelson 2013:60). In no time, half of Alexandria was singing this slogan. Jesus was indeed God, but He was not identical to the self-existent God. In other words, Jesus was God by way of elevation to that status by God, the Father, since He probably was brought into existence at a much earlier time than all other creatures. It just pleased the Father to elevate His Son to the status of God. Otherwise the Son is a creature. If the

Father had not elevated Him to that status, He would occupy a position of a creature like all other creatures.

Arius' view, however, was not left unchecked. The table of theological debate received a counter proposal from a remarkable opponent in the person of Athanasius (ca. 296-373). At the beginning of the Arian dispute, Athanasius was in his early twenties. The popularity of Athanasius is not difficult to see, for at this early age, he was already the secretary to the bishop of Alexandria. Church history suggests that Athanasius was so stubborn that he never gave in on anything. It has been reported that he once grabbed the bridle of Constantine's horse and refused to let go until Constantine had conceded a theological point (Placher & Nelson 2013:60). He died at about 80 after he had become bishop of Alexandria, had been exiled five times to every corner of the empire, had hidden for years in the deserts of Egypt, had received popular ovations greater than those given to any military hero, and had taken on every opponent – from the emperor to the lowest of ranks (Placher & Nelson 2013:60). This is the description of the man who sharply opposed Arius' view that Jesus was not God in the sense of being self-existent like God, the Father.

To appreciate the debate, it must be reiterated that Arius argued that the Son had been created in time. On the other hand, Athanasius suggested that the Son was begotten eternally. Thus, the conflicts between *creating* and *begetting*, and between *in time* and *eternally* shaped their debate. Two Christologists created a controversy that compelled great theological minds of the early centuries of the Christian Church to sit and decide which way to go if the Church of God were to remain united.

It has been observed that Jewish theology had drawn a sharp line between God and His creation (Placher & Nelson 2013). In other words, Jewish thought, which actually found itself in Christian debates, made it difficult for Christologists such as Athanasius, to accept Arius' view. Therefore, Athanasius argued that if God, the Son were created, He could not be divine. On the other hand, the Arians protested that they did believe in the Son's divinity. Athanasius responded that even if the Arians could do so consistently, they would then believe in two divine beings – one uncreated and the other created, implying that

they believed in two Gods. It was therefore necessary for them to argue that either Jesus was not truly God, because He Himself was one of the creatures, or if, with regard to the Scriptures, they went on to call Him God, it was impossible for them to deny that there were two Gods (Placher & Nelson 2013:60-61).

In his *Oratio contra Arianos 3:16* (*Orations against the Arians 3:16*), Athanasius challenges the Arians:

For if it be not so, but the Word is a creature and a work out of nothing, either He is not True God because He is Himself one of the creatures, or if they name Him God from regard for the Scriptures, they must of necessity say that there are two Gods, one Creator, the other creature, and must serve two Lords, one Unoriginate, and the other originate and a creature; and must have two faiths, one in the True God, and the other in one who is made and fashioned by themselves and called God (cf. Knight 2017a).

The Arians therefore unconsciously taught that there were two Gods and this, according to Athanasius, did not have support in both the OT and NT. This argument directly contradicted the Jewish teaching of the one God of Israel (Deut 6:4), and it suggested that the Arians were actually polytheistic, although they themselves did not see it that way. They were polytheistic because they did not view the Son as being divine in the sense in which they thought about the Father. What I mean is that if Jesus is a lesser God than God, the Father, then, it cannot not be said that there is one God in the sense of the Christian concept of God, which allows for one God composed of three Persons. Despite believing in the Trinity, Christians teach that there is only one God. Oliver and Oliver (2019:9-10 of 12) suggest that the problem of the oneness of God can be answered by considering God's omnipresence. For the Arians, it can be observed that while they avoided Sabellianism, they did not escape the trap of polytheism, since they considered Jesus to be a lesser God.

As already noted above, Athanasius argued that the Son was not created but 'begotten'. He observed that anything created was made out of a separate material, just like a pot, for instance, had nothing substantial in common with the potter who made it. On the other hand, 'begotten', or 'born from', implied that the Son came out from God, the Father as a child comes out of its parents' substance. Thus, calling Jesus 'begotten', makes Him divine and not a creature. For Athanasius, therefore, calling the Son 'begotten', suggested that the Son was 'of the same substance' (*homoousios*) with the Father (Placher & Nelson 2013:61). However, for Athanasius the begetting of the Son was not like the begetting of a human child. He opined that the generation of God, the Son, is in some way not like that of human beings, which requires an existence after that of the parents. In Jesus' case, because His nature was infinite and eternal, His generation was, of necessity, also infinite and eternal (cf. Placher & Nelson 2013:61).

It was Athanasius' view that being begotten did not entail being created and therefore the Son could be one without being the other, and so He *could* be God (Hill 2006:84). The point to note is that, in Athanasius' opinion the Son was not 'begotten in time', instead, His relation with the Father is eternal. Thus, the thrust of his position was that the Son *must* be God. For this reason, Athanasius could not accept Arius' slogan: 'There was a time when the Son was not'. He argued that if Jesus had come into existence, he had already undergone change and might change again. It was Athanasius' argument that if Arius was correct, then the same nature is in Jesus Christ as in a human being. If this is the case, then Jesus is liable to change and variation – He may thus turn to evil ways if He is so inclined – His nature, like ours, is then mutable (Knight 2017b).

The logical conclusion that Athanasius drew from such an argument was that if our salvation rested in a Jesus who could change, then it could not be secure, and for him, a Jesus who had come into existence was necessarily someone who could also change. Since Jesus could then change and even become evil, human beings did not have a reliable substitute. Athanasius saw in Arius' teaching no hope for the fallen world, because Arius' Jesus was not God in the sense of the OT and NT, who created human beings, and since only the Creator had authority to save the breakers of His law, Arius'

Christology, which took Jesus outside the realm of the self-existent God, robbed fallen humans of a Saviour.

Like most Christian thinkers of this period, Athanasius believed that Jesus saved people primarily through who He was. In other words, salvation rested in the *Person* of Jesus and not so much in His *work*. Irenaeus had taught this theory much earlier, as Hill (2006:84) observes: 'Irenaeus, nearly two centuries earlier, had taught that in Jesus divinity and humanity meet. Through him, divinity is introduced into humanity, and it spreads, almost like a benign infection, restoring what was lost in Adam'.

Based on this view of how Jesus saved people, Athanasius' existential question was this: How could this happen if Jesus were not really God? In his view, human beings were saved by being deified. However, if Jesus was not God, it was not possible for human beings to be deified – that being the case, human beings could then not be saved. Thus, the gist of Athanasius' argument was that Jesus needed to be God, in the sense of God the Father, if He was to save fallen human beings. He thus saw no light in Arius' teaching that Jesus had a beginning, for if He had a beginning, then He was not God in the sense of God the Father.

Interestingly, both Arius and Athanasius won considerable support and that aroused the concern of Constantine. Just a short while ago, Constantine had allegedly converted to Christianity. About him, Placher and Nelson (2013:61) observe: 'Whatever his [Constantine's] motives – a notorious historical puzzle – he clearly had hoped for Christian support in holding his fragile empire together'.

Constantine, therefore, called over 300 bishops together to a council in Nicaea. This, as earlier noted, was the first official council of the whole church. It condemned the Arians and wrote a statement of faith, which is popularly known as the Nicene creed. It declared that Jesus was "begotten" not "created", and "of the same substance as the Father" (Leith 1963:30-31).

To sum up, there are basically three theories that precipitated the debate leading to Nicaea. Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius taught that Jesus was identical with God, the Father, suggesting that the only God of the Bible is Jesus Christ. For Arius, there was a time when God, the Son, had come into being, and He was definitely lower than the Father; He was a creature like any other creature. He believed that Jesus was certainly the greatest creature, a sort of mighty archangel, but not God, in the sense of the one we call the Father (Hill 2006:80). Athanasius' theory was that the Son was *begotten* from eternity. He argued that being begotten did not entail being created and therefore, the Son could be one without being the other, and so He *could* be God. The thrust of his position, however, was that the Son *must* be God. Athanasius believed that Jesus saved people primarily through who He was. Like Irenaeus, he believed that in Jesus, divinity and humanity meet. Through Jesus, divinity is introduced into humanity and it spreads, almost like a benign infection, restoring what was lost in Adam. This introduction of divinity into humanity would not have been possible if Jesus had not been God. It should be noted that both the Christologies of Arius and Athanasius have influenced the Christologies of thinkers who have shaped Christology in its current state.

In closing the debate, the Council of Nicaea had to formulate what has gone into history as the first official Christological statement from an ontological perspective. The Nicene statement reads as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible; And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of the same substance as the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth; Who because of us [humans] and because of our salvation came down, and became incarnate, and became [human], and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead, And in the Holy Spirit. But as for those who say, There was when He

was not, and Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes (Early Christian Texts sa.).

It would appear that the phrase '*of the same substance as of the Father*' was understood differently among the theologians who signed the Nicene creed. Thus, the Nicene creed precipitated other debates, which led to the clarification of the statement. I will therefore consider the doctrine of the Trinity, which seems to have been formulated to clarify the relationship between the Father and the Son and also, to include the Holy Spirit.

#### **4.2.1 The Nicene Creed Clarified: The Doctrine of the Trinity**

After the Nicene creed was signed, one would have expected that the question being debated had been settled, but other arguments broke out almost at once (Placher & Nelson 2013:62). It did not take long for those who signed the creed to disagree on what it meant. The crucial debate centred on the statement that God, the Son was 'of the same substance' (*homoousios*) with God, the Father.

Most of the bishops at Nicaea interpreted *homoousios* to mean that God, the Father is made of stuff which is unchanging and eternal, and God, the Son, is made *of the same sort of stuff* as God, the Father (Placher & Nelson 2013:62). On the other hand, Athanasius insisted that God, the Son was *of the same substance* as God, the Father. He charged his opponents with abandoning the Nicene creed by replacing 'of the same substance' with 'of similar substance'. In the Greek language, the change was from *homoousios* to *homoiousios*, which really was a small difference. The effect of this change, in Athanasius' opinion, however, was that it led to a departure from monotheism, since it implied the existence of two separate beings, both made of divine substance. In other words, Athanasius thought that the *homoiousios* theologians were advocating polytheism, for if Jesus was made of the same sort of stuff as God, the Father, then the

two could not be said to be one God. He therefore thought things needed to be put straight (Placher & Nelson 2013:62).

It appears that the difficulty for Athanasius concerned the NT passages that made a distinction between the Father and the Son, which had earlier been the crucial problem for the Sabellians. How could God, the Son pray to God, the Father, or God, the Father be greater than God, the Son, if they were *homoousios*? If Athanasius' position were to be victorious, as it eventually was, there was a need for someone to explain how God, the Father and God, the Son could be 'of the same substance', yet not identical. The theologians of the time struggled with Athanasius' arguments.

Another complication that had been added, was the debate concerning the Holy Spirit. The traditional formula of baptism in Matthew 28:19, which carried the authority of both Scripture and church practice, seemed to imply that whatever was said about God, the Father and God, the Son ought to be said about God, the Holy Spirit as well. In other words, the baptism formula suggests that God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit could be referred to as God in the sense in which God, the Father is referred to, for how could they be placed in the baptism formula in a way that suggests equality with God, the Father, if they are not equal to Him? It was therefore necessary to come up with a way to explain the relationship that existed among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Of particular importance at this point was the position of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.

Scripture is very clear that the works of the Holy Spirit played an extremely important role in the early church. Nevertheless, for a long time, theologians had devoted little attention to Him. About 200 AD Tertullian called the Holy Spirit 'God', but no Christian writing in Greek did so until the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Placher & Nelson 2013:62). The Nicene creed stated belief 'in the Holy Spirit' (Hill 2006:81) but did not say anything more in terms of how the Holy Spirit related with God, the Father and God, the Son. Thus, there was an urgent need to clarify the Nicene creed, especially with respect to the Holy Spirit.



It is important to note at this point that the much-needed clarification in the Nicene creed fell on three theologians from Cappadocia (now Northern Turkey): Basil and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus. The Cappadocian theologians saved *homoousios* theology by making a terminological distinction because the debate focused on terminology (Placher & Nelson 2013:63). Whether or not this would really solve the problem, was of course, to be seen later.

It is necessary to reiterate that the problem was how to define the difference among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, if they were 'of the same substance'. The Cappadocian theologians used terminology that went back to Origen, and suggested that God was one *ousia*, but three *hypostaseis* (hypostases) (Placher & Nelson 2013:63). An ordinary dictionary might define both *ousia* and *hypostasis* as 'substance'. Both the Nicene creed and some of Athanasius' works treated *ousia* and *hypostasis* as synonymous terms. The Cappadocian theologians, however, differentiated the two terms. In other words, they decided to leave Athanasius' meaning, in order to save Athanasius' Christology. This, of course, was not a simple task for them to achieve.

How were the two terms distinguished? Think of three people, John, James, and Jane. Each of them is a particular individual (a *hypostasis*), but the three are all human beings, sharing a common essence or substance (*ousia*) of humanity. In other words, the Cappadocian theologians argued that as John is a particular individual (a *hypostasis*) or a human being (a substance or *ousia*), Jesus is 'the Son' (*hypostasis*) and 'God' (*ousia*). Jesus is a different individual (*hypostasis*) from the Father, but 'of the same substance' (*homoousios*), just as the Nicene creed had stated (Placher & Nelson 2013:63).

This interpretation created a difficulty in that the three persons, John, James, and Jane could be counted as three human beings. Analogically, then, did the Cappadocian theologians suggest that we should count the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three Gods. In response to this, the Cappadocians suggested that God is a special case, in at least two ways (Placher & Nelson 2013:63): First, we think of three people as separate in part because they might disagree, based on different motives, or pursue different goals.

The three different *hypostaseis*, nevertheless, always act with reference to one another, and in perfect accord. Second, in other cases we can distinguish the separate individuals from the stuff of which they are made, because they are subject to change. To illustrate this point, Basil used the example of three copper coins, which can be melted down into a single lump of copper, and then, probably, recast as four coins (Placher & Nelson 2013:64). In this regard, we distinguish the particular number of coins from the copper out of which they were made.

It was noted that this illustration does not apply to the divine *hypostaseis*, for the three divine *hypostaseis* are the only form the divine *ousia* has ever taken or could ever take. Theologians should never think about the substance of divinity apart from the three particular forms it takes. When we talk of divinity, we are talking of just the three *hypostaseis*, and so in this case, in an important way, we cannot think of the 'oneness' as something different from the 'threeness'. This being the case, there is only one God and not three Gods (Placher & Nelson 2013:64).

The three theologians from Cappadocia therefore explained how God is a special case. It is important, however, to remember that they were already influenced by Platonic philosophy, with its insistence that the universal form is more real than the particular individual. 'Even with three human beings or three copper coins', Placher and Nelson (2013:65) argue, the Cappadocians 'probably saw more underlying unity than we do'. A survey of Christological works reveals that even modern theologians often have a tough time restating their theory of the Trinity in plausible form apart from the Platonic assumptions. In other words, it is not easy to explain how God could be one, if there are actually three Persons bearing that title.

The Cappadocian Trinitarianism, however, had another problem, as it depended so much on particular terms that one could hardly express it in any language but Greek. From the time of Tertullian, Latin-speaking Christians had made a parallel distinction between three *personae* (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and one *substantia*. However, *substantia* is the literal Latin translation of *hypostasis* (both terms can be translated with 'that which stands

under'). Thus, the Latin-speaking Christians read the Greek references to 'three hypostaseis' as meaning 'three *substantiae*'. With time, however, two linguistic halves of Christianity decided that they were just using different terms to explain the same thing (Placher & Nelson 2013:65). It has thus been observed that Augustine (Schaff 1885d:109) understood this when he said that the Greeks spoke of one essence and three substances, while the Latin-speaking people referred to one essence or substance and three Persons.

In fact, the agreement on terminology that was arrived at between the Greek- and the Latin-speaking theologians may have covered up a fundamental difference. It would appear that Greek theology always began with God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. In this light, Greek Christians generally addressed prayers to one particular hypostasis, not just to God. They found it difficult to unite the three *hypostaseis* in one *ousia* (Placher & Nelson 2013:65).

On the other hand, Latin-speaking Christians began with the unity of one God. Their problem lay in explaining how that *substantia* could involve three *personae*. It must be observed that their choice of terms was revealing. The term *persona* can, like *hypostasis*, be translated with 'particular individual', but it can also refer to a character in a play or even the mask that an actor wore to play a particular part (Placher & Nelson 2013:65).

What can be concluded from this is that the Greeks emphasised the threeness, while the Latins preferred the oneness. Thus, as Placher and Nelson (2013:65) have noted: 'If Greek Trinitarianism risked so emphasizing the distinctions that it ended up with three Gods, Latin Trinitarianism risked treating the *personae* as merely masks or roles and denying any real distinctions at all'.

Augustine remarked that all these theories sought to speak of things that cannot be uttered, and the Trinity is a favourite target of critics to show that Christianity is logically incoherent (Placher & Nelson 2013:65). What Augustine meant was that there is an element of mystery to God's existence, with which theologians who started to speculate

about it, armed critics with ammunition to discredit Christianity as an incoherent religion. In other words, Augustine thought that the Trinity was a mystery, which simply needed to be accepted by faith because it is taught in Scripture. To explain the Trinity would thus be an exercise in futility.

Placher and Nelson (2013:65) have made some important observations on the theological debates regarding the Trinity. They observe that from the debates, it should at least be acknowledged that 4<sup>th</sup>-century theologians knew that one (does) not equal three. It would appear that they used their language in such a way as to avoid conclusions that they thought were dangerously wrong. A critical analysis of Sabellianism reveals that it contradicted Scripture, for the NT distinguishes between God, the Father and God, the Son. Arianism led people to believe in two divinities and the unthinkable possibility that Jesus might change in unpredictable ways.

Anyone who tries to distinguish between God, the Father and God, the Son and avoid Sabellianism, while preserving an identity of substance between them and avoiding Arianism, will inevitably move toward something like the doctrine of the Trinity (Placher & Nelson 2013:65-66). Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity, to some extent, clarified that part of the Nicene creed, stating, 'And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father...And in the Holy Spirit' (Early Christian Texts sa.).

While the doctrine of the Trinity could be viewed as having clarified, at least up to that point, the relations between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it said nothing about another very important issue, which is the relation between the human and the divine in Jesus (Placher & Nelson 2013:66). This issue was the subject of the debates leading to the Council of Chalcedon, which will occupy my attention in what follows.

### 4.3 The Debates Leading to Chalcedon and the Chalcedonian Creed

The Nicene creed had concluded that Jesus was of the same substance as the Father. Jesus was God, but not identical to the Father. He was a separate personality from the Father. He was not only divine, but also human. The problem that theologians now faced was to establish how divinity and humanity related in the Person of Jesus Christ. Given how different humanity is from divinity, how could Jesus be both at the same time?

The mystery of the incarnation seems to have given the theologians of the day a tough topic of debate. Human beings are creatures – they have a human nature. God is divine. The two are incompatible. Therefore, when God became human, did He give up His divine nature? In other words, did Jesus possess only a human nature? If this was the case, did He cease to be God? On the other hand, if He remained God, was He two Persons in one? If He was one Person with two natures, how did these two natures blend in Him?

Gregory of Nyssa in his *The Great Catechism 11*, quickly admitted that he did not know, stating:

We are not capable of detecting how the Divine and the human elements are mixed up together. The miracles recorded permit us not to entertain a doubt that God was born in the nature of man. But how – this, as being a subject unapproachable by the processes of reasoning, we decline to investigate (cf. Knight 2017c).

Even after Gregory of Nyssa had admitted that he did not know how Jesus could be both divine and human at the same time, like with other issues, some theologians developed ideas that forced their fellow Christians to define their faith more precisely in order to show why these ideas were wrong. The debate became intertwined with the jealousy between two of the greatest cities where eastern Christianity dominated: Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria (Placher & Nelson 2013:66).

Alexandrian theologians espoused the ‘Logos-flesh’ Christology. According to Placher and Nelson (2013:66), when this ‘Logos-flesh’ Christology of Alexandria was pushed to

an extreme, it turned into Apollinarianism. Antiochian theologians, on the other hand, supported the 'two-natures' Christology. Placher and Nelson observe that when this 'two-natures' Christology of Antioch was pushed to an extreme, it became Nestorianism. Similarly, an Alexandrian attack on Nestorianism, when pushed to its extreme, developed into Monophysitism. After analysing these arguments, the Council of Chalcedon found a compromise that most Christians accepted, but the Nestorians and the Monophysites continued to hold the allegiance of many.

It is important at this point to look at the arguments of the two schools of thought separately, that is the 'Logos-Flesh Christology and Apollinarianism' and the 'Two-natures Christology and Nestorianism'.

#### **4.3.1 The Theology of Alexandria: Logos-Flesh Christology and Apollinarianism**

Placher and Nelson (2013:66) note that since the days of Philo, the divine Word, the *Logos*, had been one of the dominant ideas in Alexandrian thought. Thus, in an effort to understand the relation of humanity and divinity in Jesus, Alexandrians started with the Gospel of John's assertion that the Word became flesh (John 1:14).

Alexandrian theologian, Athanasius (Schaff 1885f:199), argues that the Word of God took a human body in order to save the fallen, sinful human beings, so that having shared our human birth, He might make us partakers of His divine and spiritual nature. In other words, Athanasius saw the incarnation as God's solution to the problem of sin. Of course, it has already been pointed out that Athanasius thought of salvation in terms of the deification of fallen, sinful human beings. Salvation, in his view, involved internal healing, which took place in the life of Jesus Christ.

In the late 300s, another Alexandrian, named Apollinaris, tried to clarify what Athanasius had meant. But trying to clarify what could not be clarified, had proved to be a dangerous action in the past, and so it proved again (Placher & Nelson 2013:66). In other words, Apollinaris' clarification did not really clarify Athanasius' Christology, it complicated it and even added more to it than Athanasius taught.

It was Apollinaris' argument that ordinary human beings had a body and a mind, while Jesus had a human body but with the divine *Logos* taking the place of the human mind. He asserted that the Word of God became flesh without assuming a human mind, since a human mind is subject to change and is captive to filthy imaginations (Placher & Nelson 2013:66). Instead, argued Apollinaris, the Word of God was a divine mind, changeless and heavenly. Thus, he identified Jesus with human beings only in as far as His body was concerned and not His mind. According to Apollinaris, Jesus was a human being with the mind of God – He had a human body and a divine mind.

This argument of Apollinaris did not stand well with the theologians of Antioch. Theodore of Mopsuestia, the great leader of the theologians of Antioch, accused Apollinaris of teaching contrary to Scripture (Placher & Nelson 2013:67). The NT description of Jesus as 'afraid' and 'growing in wisdom' suggests that He had a human mind. Thus, if the view of Apollinaris is to hold true, he must interpret Jesus' growth in wisdom to mean that this was growth in the body. However, Theodore was of the view that Jesus' body did not grow in wisdom, for the body does not grow in wisdom. This rebuttal needed to be responded to by Apollinaris.

Apollinaris did not give up his teaching; instead he offered a compromise. He argued that the human mind is composed of parts: The lower elements feel fears and emotions, while reason dwells in its highest part (Placher & Nelson 2013:67). In Apollinaris' view, Jesus had not only a human body but also the lower parts of a human mind – the *Logos* replaced only the human reason.

In his response, Theodore argued that the real problem concerned salvation, an area in which Apollinaris' compromise did not help (Placher & Nelson 2013:67). What Apollinaris' compromise amounted to was that, because Jesus saved humanity by uniting it with divinity, only those parts of us which have been united with divinity in Him will be saved. In other words, if Jesus lacked a human reason, then human reason has not been united with divinity and was not saved. Thus, as opined by Gregory of Nazianzus: 'If anyone has put his trust in Him as Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite

unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved' (Schaff 1894:440).

What did the theologians of Antioch teach? How did the Council of Constantinople view Apollinaris? I will discuss it in what follows.

#### **4.3.2 The Theology of Antioch: Two-natures Christology and Nestorianism**

In the debate between Apollinaris and Theodore, Theodore's argument carried the day, and the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD condemned Apollinaris, but that condemnation alone did not solve the problem: Theodore had to offer an alternative theory of the relation of the human and divine natures in Jesus. To do this, he followed the Cappadocians in introducing a distinction in terminology. He opined that Jesus had two natures (*physeis*) in one Person (*prosopon*) (Placher & Nelson 2013:67). Just what these terms meant was at first not clear, but Theodore tried to explain. In his view, Jesus was fully human. The Son of Man did not just have a human body; He felt emotions and pains as all human beings do. At this time, it was common knowledge among the theologians that divinity could not suffer or change. In light of this, Theodore explained the relation between the divine and the human natures in Jesus by treating each nature (divine or human) as a subject to which one could assign different predicates. Thus, when Jesus wept or feared, that was the human nature, and when He performed miracles or forgave sins, the divine nature was at work.

Nestorius, who became patriarch of Constantinople in 428 AD, encountered problems, because he followed all the implications of this Two-natures Christology, especially on the issue of Mary, the 'mother or bearer of God'. By the time of the controversy, the Christians had been praying to Mary, 'the bearer of God'. Irenaeus and other leading theologians had described Mary as the second Eve who undid the sin of the first Eve just as Jesus, the second Adam, undid the sin of the first Adam (Placher & Nelson 2013:67). Thus, popular piety revered Mary.



At least in his own view, Nestorius gladly honoured Mary, but he insisted that no one should call her the 'bearer of God', for being born was something that had happened to Jesus' humanity and not to His divinity. He argued that calling Mary 'the mother of God', would be saying, when Jesus reaches two years of age, like we say about human beings, God is now two years old. In other words, if God was born, then He could grow to be two years old like human beings do. It applied a predicate of the human nature to the divine nature (Placher & Nelson 2013:68). In his view, one could call Mary 'the bearer of Jesus Christ' and not 'the bearer of God'.

It would appear that when theologians take a path that interferes with popular piety, they rouse opposition, and Nestorius soon found himself under bitter attack from the supporters of Marian theology, for they viewed him as a defamer of the virgin Mary. His case was worsened by his chief opponent, Cyril of Alexandria, who was one of the nastiest controversialists in the history of theology (Placher & Nelson 2013:68). It is, however, the judgement of leading scholars that Nestorius himself was not a 'Nestorian', but that some poorly chosen terminology, coupled with the opposition of an aggressive opponent, led to an unjust condemnation of his views (Loofs 1975:60-61). In this light, Erickson (2013:663) suggests that Nestorius' language was somewhat ambiguous and inconsistent. It must be noted also that Nestorianism arose in a period of intense political rivalry in the church (Kelly 1960:311-312). Cyril had succeeded his uncle as patriarch of Alexandria and stopped at nothing in defence of Alexandria and himself. Placher and Nelson (2013:68) observe that Cyril 'put some legitimate questions to Nestorius'.

There is no doubt that Nestorius argued that Jesus must be fully human so that all humanity could be joined with divinity and be saved. Nevertheless, he emphasised the distinction between the two natures in such a vigorous way that it was hard to see how humanity and divinity really came together. Nestorius agreed that Jesus' suffering on the cross contributed to our salvation, but, according to this sharp distinction between the two natures, only humanity, not divinity, suffered (Placher & Nelson 2013:68).

To settle the controversy, a council of bishops was called to meet at Ephesus in 431 AD, with Cyril in charge. It has been reported that bad weather delayed the arrival of Syrian bishops sympathetic to Nestorius, but Cyril refused to wait for them (Placher & Nelson 2013:68). Cyril secured the help of a troop of Egyptian monks who threatened recalcitrant bishops to support the condemnation of Nestorius.

There is need to observe that kenotic Christology as it is understood today was never a part of Christological orthodoxy (Reymond 1998:617). The Christological position of the Church Fathers is mirrored in Cyril's letter to Nestorius:

[The eternal Word] subjected himself to birth for us, and came forth from a woman, without casting off that which he was; but although he assumed flesh and blood, he remained what he was, God in essence and in truth. Neither do we say his flesh was changed into the nature of divinity, nor that the ineffable nature of the Word of God was laid aside for the nature of flesh; for he is unchanged and absolutely unchangeable, being the same always, according to the Scriptures. For although visible and a child in swaddling clothes, and even in the bosom of his Virgin Mother, he filled all creation as God, and was a fellow-ruler with him who begat him, for the Godhead is without quantity and dimension, and cannot have limits (Tertullian.org sa.; cf. Schaff 1956:202).

It should be noted that the view condemned by the church as Nestorian, fell short of the full orthodox position, and was probably held by some of Nestorius' followers (Bethune-Baker 1903:274-275). The victory in the condemnation of Nestorianism put Alexandrian theology to the front again. Thus, it is important to explore Alexandrian theology again, for Chalcedon did not resolve the Christological debate until Alexandrian theologians had given a response to Nestorianism.

### 4.3.3 The Theology of Alexandria Again: Monophysitism

After the victory, it appears that Cyril began to have second thoughts about his theology. His opponents, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius had taught that Jesus had two natures. In a characteristic unwillingness to compromise, Cyril at first insisted on Jesus' oneness in every respect: One Person (*prosopon*), one nature (*physis*), one particular individual (*hypostasis*) (Placher & Nelson 2013:68-69). With time, nevertheless, Cyril came to admit that after all, Jesus had been both human and divine, and one needed some term to refer to that duality. He conceded that it was possible to speak of 'two natures' as long as acknowledgement was made of only one Person and one *hypostasis*. The technical Latin term for this was *communicatio idiomatum* – the interchange of attributes.

In this *communicatio idiomatum* (although Jesus suffered as a human being and worked miracles as God, and although Mary had borne a human being), one could say (contrary to Nestorius) that the divinity had suffered and the humanity had worked miracles, and that Mary had borne the divinity. This is because, in Cyril's view, humanity and divinity combined in such a way in Jesus as to justify such an exchange of predicates. Evaluating Cyril's view, Placher and Nelson (2013:69) observe:

Cyril's insistence on the *communicatio idiomatum* still gave grounds for the condemnation of Nestorius, for one could apply the human predicate of 'being born' to the divine nature and thereby say that Mary gave birth to God; but Cyril's switch from one to two natures left some of his own supporters stranded.

Cyril died in 444 AD, and shortly after this, an elderly monk, named Eutyches, became the focus of attention of the theological controversy between Alexandria and Antioch. Eutyches seems to have been fuzzy on a great many theological points, but he was absolutely sure that Jesus only had one nature (Placher & Nelson 2013:69). His basic contention seems to have been that there were two natures before the incarnation, but only one afterwards (Pelican 1971:262-263).

Cyril's successor at Alexandria, Dioscurus, regretted that Cyril had conceded anything at all to his opponents and seized on Eutyches as the symbolic hero of the cause of 'one nature' (*mono + physis*). In 449 AD, Dioscurus presided over a council at Ephesus that vindicated Eutyches and condemned any reference to 'two natures' after Jesus' birth, but the carryings on at this 'Robber Council' created a major scandal. It has been reported that Dioscurus refused to let his opponents speak at all and used an army of monks to handle anyone who threatened to cause trouble (Placher & Nelson 2013:69). At that council, the Pope's representative barely escaped back to Rome with his life.

As it would be expected, many 'Monophysite' Christians, loyal to the traditions of Alexandria and Cyril's earlier views, accepted the conclusions of the Robber Council, but other Christians found both the condemnation of two natures and the way it had been accomplished disturbing. The Christians, who were dissatisfied with the outcome of the Robber Council, with Emperor Theodosius II at the head, arranged another council at Chalcedon, to straighten things out. The bishops at Chalcedon based their conclusions in part on a letter that Pope Leo I had written from Rome to the Robber Council. In the Robber Council, Dioscurus had not allowed anyone there to read it (Placher & Nelson 2013:69).

In the Definition of Chalcedon, the bishops rejected Monophysitism and, basically, returned to Cyril's later position. As noted earlier, Cyril's later position stated that Jesus had two natures – human and divine – which coexist in one Person, and the oneness of the Person makes it appropriate to apply the predicates of either nature to the other: The *communicatio idiomatum* (Placher & Nelson 2013:69). By the time of the Council of Chalcedon, every phrase had its importance.

For the purposes of this study and in view of the fact that one of the aims of this study is to critically evaluate the two landmark Christological creeds of the first five centuries, it is necessary to reproduce the Definition of Chalcedon:

Following the Holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the

same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us. These things, therefore, having been expressed by us with the greatest accuracy and attention, the Holy Ecumenical Synod defines that no one shall be suffered to bring forward a different faith, nor to write, nor to put together, nor to excogitate, nor to teach it to others. But such as dare either to put together another faith, or to bring forward or to teach or to deliver a different Creed to (those who) wish to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, from the Gentiles, or Jews or any heresy whatever, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, and the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laics; let them be anathematised (Early Church Texts sa.).

The new creed was supposedly simply an elucidation of the creed of Nicaea, more than a century earlier. It agreed with Cyril that Jesus was one Person, identical with the pre-existent Son, but it also agreed with Leo, bishop of Rome, that after the incarnation He possessed two distinct natures, one human and one divine. Before the council, Leo had written a famous letter to Flavian known as the *Tome* (although it is not really very long) in which he had approved the condemnation of Eutyches. In his *Tome*, Leo had spoken of the two natures of Jesus – one divine and one human. He taught that even after the incarnation, Jesus retained these two natures, but He remained a single Person, identical with the second Person of the Trinity (Hill 2006:98).

Where Nestorius had apparently thought of a 'nature' as a kind of 'thing' or substance, Leo was clear that a 'nature' is something that a substance possesses: it is simply a way of describing that substance. It was therefore possible for Jesus to have two natures whilst remaining only a single Person. It could thus be said that this was a middle way between Nestorianism and Eutycheanism, which the Council of Chalcedon dealt with (Hill 2006: 98).

Commenting on the Definition of Chalcedon, Placher and Nelson (2013:70) suggest that 'reasonable soul' rejects the Apollinarian view that Jesus lacked a human soul: 'Of one substance' opposes the Arians; 'the mother of God' is against Nestorius; and 'in two natures' rejects Eutyches and the Monophysites.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Ontological debates characterised the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>-century church. Some aspects of the Trinity and the union of humanity and divinity in Jesus remain a mystery. However, this is no excuse for not trying to understand what one can understand, particularly when challenges to faith raise hard questions and demand clarification. Despite the fact that it still remains difficult to explain the doctrine of the Trinity and particularly the relation existing between the two natures in Jesus, the Christological debates and the resulting creeds represent a great accomplishment. The creeds represent in a way the last great accomplishment of an intellectually united Christianity. The records surveyed suggest that

Nicaea and Chalcedon drew on the work of theologians from all parts of the then Christian world. Subsequent theological debates tended to take place in either the East or the West.

The debates leading to Nicaea and Chalcedon reveal that some actions of the councils were based not only on the subject of discussion, but also on the jealousy existing between the theologians of Alexandria and Antioch. The debates also reveal that at least one theologian (Nestorius) was condemned not only for teaching that Jesus had two natures, but also for rejecting the popular belief that Mary was 'the bearer of God'. Leading theologians such as Loofs (1975:41, 60-61) and Bethune-Baker (1908:82-100) have, however, judged that Nestorius himself was not a 'Nestorian', but that some poorly chosen terminology, coupled with the opposition of an aggressive opponent, led to an unjust condemnation of his views (Erickson 2013:663).

Political influence exerted itself in the councils. It has been noted, for instance, that one reason Nestorianism is difficult to understand and evaluate is that the Nestorian movement arose in a period of intense political rivalry in the church (Kelly 1960:311-312). Consequently, it is not always clear whether the church rejected a view because of its ideas or because of political considerations (Erickson 2013:663). Generally, however, the councils, especially Nicaea and Chalcedon, laid Christological foundations that theologians of later times have constantly referred to. I must state, however, that both Nicaea and Chalcedon probably have areas that cannot stand the scrutiny of Scripture. Therefore, these two councils themselves will have to be evaluated in light of Scripture, for only Scripture is the standard of all belief. In other words, one's Christological position must be based on Scripture and not merely on the foundations of other theologians and church councils. This is what I hope to do in this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:**

### **ROMAN CATHOLIC AND EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTOLOGIES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapter 4, I reviewed the Christological debates that led to Nicaea and Chalcedon, as well as the formulation of the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds, respectively. It is my assumption that these two creeds have influenced the three scholars selected for evaluation in this study to formulate their Christological models. I also assume that the Christological positions of the denominations that they belong to, have influenced these Christologists in the formulation of their Christological models. Thus, I have decided to review Evangelical and SDA Christologies. To appreciate the role that the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions have played in the history of Christology, I have decided to also review the Christologies of these denominations. This journey will be preparatory to my review of the works of the three scholars. In this chapter, I am focusing on Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christologies. I have decided to review both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christologies in one chapter, because the two denominations are historically related.

#### **5.2 Roman Catholic Christology**

In this review, I commit myself to using only literature which is either the product of the Roman Catholic Church as a body, or written by very authentic Roman Catholic theologians. In this way, I hope to avoid any misrepresentation of Roman Catholic Christology. Any literature from non-Catholic sources will be used very cautiously.

I should at this point reiterate my earlier commitment to only discuss the human nature of Jesus, for His divine nature is not part of this present study. In other words, I only consider the Roman Catholic view of the human nature of Jesus. His divine nature is only discussed in relation to His human nature and where it assists me to appreciate what Roman Catholics say about His human nature. I will look at the following topics: Incarnation; immaculate conception; virginal conception; and Jesus' sinlessness.



### **5.2.1 Incarnation**

Throughout its history, the Roman Catholic Church has taught that God took our human nature upon His divine nature and thus became the God-Man. A survey of Roman Catholic Christology reveals that this church frequently refers to the Nicene and the Chalcedonian creeds in its articulation of the incarnation of God. While some Roman Catholic Christologists, like Schillebeeckx (1979; 1980), may subscribe to categories of Christology such as Functional Christology, Roman Catholic Christology was birthed in the classical or ontological tradition that characterised the early Christological debates. The Christological debates focused on the two natures in the Person of Jesus, especially on how they related with each other. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the Roman Catholic Christology is all about the natures of Jesus, for this church also articulates much on the other aspects of Christology.

The way in which the Roman Catholic Christology explains the incarnation of God, is according to John 1:14. Chapman (1994:103) states that in light of John's declarative statement that 'the Word became flesh', the Roman Catholic Church firmly believes that the incarnation of God refers to the fact that He assumed our human nature for the purpose of accomplishing our salvation through it. The incarnate Word of God lived on earth in such a way that He revealed the glory of God, which is actually His character of love. The life of Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He revealed God through His life and by His death on Calvary's cross.

That God assumed a human nature, is a thought also expressed in Philippians 2:5-8 and Hebrews 10:5-7. The distinctive sign of authentic Christianity, according to Roman Catholic Christology, is a belief in the incarnation of God (Chapman 1994:103). In other words, Christianity without the incarnation of God is not any different from other religions. Christianity is unique because its founder is the incarnate Word of God. At the centre of Christianity is the God-Man. There would have been no exemplary life of obedience, death on Calvary's cross, and resurrection, if there had been no incarnation. Thus, the incarnation of God is indispensable. It is a subject that deserves serious contemplation by all of Jesus Christ's followers.

Anticipating an objection to the teaching that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, Chapman (1994:103) asserts that the unique and unrepeatable event of all ages, which we call the incarnation of God, does not in any way suggest that Jesus was half God and half man. It does not imply that He came about through a confused mixture of divine and human attributes. This is neither what the Scriptures nor the Roman Catholic Church teaches. Catholicism teaches that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.

The incarnation of God, which the Roman Catholic Christologists teach, is that God became truly human, while not ceasing to be truly God (Brockman & Pescantini 2004:39). Jesus Christ is truly God and a truly human – the only being in the entire universe who had two natures. He was not two Persons in one Person, but one Person with two distinct natures.

How did the Son of God become a man? In response to this question, F.M. Phiri, a Roman Catholic Theologian, says that in God's plan, God, the Father wants to send, God, the Son accepts to be sent, and God, the Holy Spirit prepares Jesus Christ's body in Mary's womb (Phiri 2014:104). At the time of the incarnation of God, Mary was a virgin, who willingly accepted to serve as a vessel through which God gave the long-awaited Saviour to the world.

Thus, according to Roman Catholic Christology, God became human when the Holy Trinity acted together for that particular purpose. The nature of Jesus in His human form is explained in more detail by a confessed statement of the church itself. Chapman (1994:105) refers to this statement when he observes that, because human nature was assumed, not absorbed, in the mystery of all mysteries, where divinity and humanity were perfectly united, the Christian Church has confessed throughout history that Jesus' humanity was real. Jesus was a human in His mind, while He exercised His intellect and will as a human being. In other words, He was a real human being. God really became human, while not ceasing to be God. The Catholic Church acknowledges that Jesus Christ existed as a real human being and not a phantom – He had flesh and bones. Some of the people who lived during His time saw Him, touched Him, and even ate with Him.

There is a need to observe that the Christian Church always remembered in Christological debates that Jesus Christ's human nature belongs to the second Person of the Godhead, who took it upon His divine and holy nature. It is noteworthy that whatever Jesus was and did in His incarnational nature, derived from His relation to the Trinity, for He did not cease to be part of the Holy Trinity when He assumed the human nature. Therefore, it can be argued that in His incarnational nature, He communicated to His humanity His own personal mode of existence in the Trinity, and in His mind, as in His body, He expressed humanly the divine ways of the Trinity (Chapman 1994:106).

With respect to knowledge, the Roman Catholic Church argues that the human mind that the Son of God assumed, was endowed with true human knowledge, and that is why this knowledge was not in itself unlimited: It was exercised in the historical conditions of Jesus' existence in space and time (Chapman 1994:106). It was in this way that Luke, the doctor, said that 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men' (Luke 2:52). Jesus Christ even had to inquire for Himself about what human beings learn only from experience (cf. e.g. Mark 6:38; 8:27; John 11:34). This limitation on His human knowledge is in tandem with the reality of His voluntary emptying of Himself, taking 'the form of a bondservant' (Phil 2:7). This suggests that He truly was a human being, for in His incarnational life, He did not have the eternal knowledge He always had before He assumed the human nature.

However, this truly human knowledge of Jesus Christ still expressed the divine life of His Person. Chapman (1994:106) notes that the human nature of Jesus, united with the Word, had knowledge of, and revealed in itself everything that pertains to God. This is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that Jesus had of His Father. Additionally, He, in His human knowledge, showed the divine penetration He had into the secret thoughts of human hearts. It is not overboard, therefore, to say that by His union to the divine wisdom in the Person of the Word incarnate, He enjoyed in His human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans He had come to reveal (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30). What Jesus admitted to not knowing in one area, He elsewhere declared Himself not sent to reveal (cf. Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). In other

words, if there was anything in His experience, which suggested that He lacked knowledge of, then His Father did not see it necessary to reveal it to Him. God revealed to His Son only that which was necessary for our salvation.

Roman Catholic Christology clearly states that Jesus possessed two distinct wills and two natural operations – divine and human. In this light, Chapman (1994:107) reports that at the sixth council, Constantinople III in 681 AD, the Christian Church confessed boldly that Jesus Christ had two wills and two natural operations – divine and human – and yet He was one Person. In other words, the two wills and two natural operations did not make Him two Persons. At the incarnation of God, the divine and human natures were mysteriously united, but throughout Jesus Christ's earthly life, they remained distinct. This is a mystery, which the Roman Catholic Christologists accept as a fact, because it is recorded in God's word and it has been passed on as a tradition throughout the history of the Christian Church.

Note should be made that these two wills and two natural operations are not opposed to each other, but cooperate in such a way that Jesus willed humanly in obedience to the Father and the Holy Spirit all that He had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation. Thus, it can be argued that His human will did not fight against His divine and almighty will, but cooperated with it (Chapman 1994:107).

Jesus did not only have a human mind and a human will, He also had a true human body. His human body was finite. In this light, Chapman (1994:107) argues that, since the Word of God became flesh in taking upon itself a true humanity, Jesus' body was not infinite, but finite. According to Roman Catholic belief, in the body of Jesus Christ, believers see their God made flesh and so are brought in favour with the God they cannot see (*Roman Missal*, Preface of Christmas I; cf. Chapman 1994:107). The individual characteristics of Jesus' body express the divine Person of God's Son. Roman Catholic Christology goes further to state that Jesus has made features of His body His own, to the point that His devotees can venerate them when they are portrayed in what the church calls a holy

image, for the devotee who venerates the image is venerating in it the one the image depicts (*Council of Nicaea II*; cf. Chapman 1994:107).

In brief, the doctrine of the incarnation in as far as Roman Catholic Christology is concerned, can be itemised in five statements: First, at the time appointed by the Triune God, the eternal Word, that is, the Word and substantial Image of the Father became incarnate. In doing this, He did not lose His divine nature – instead, He took upon His holy, divine nature our human nature. Second, Jesus Christ is true God and a true man, in the unity of His divine Person. It is for this reason that He is the one and only mediator between God and humankind. Third, Jesus possesses two natures – one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one Person of God’s Son. Fourth, Jesus, being true God and a true man, had a human intellect and will, perfectly attuned and subject to His divine intellect and divine will, which He has in common with God, the Father and God, the Holy Spirit. Fifth, the incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the Person of the Word (Chapman 1994:108).

It is important at this point to also look at the dogma of immaculate conception, which the Roman Catholic Church teaches and defends in its apologetics. This is because this doctrine is directly related to the type of human nature God assumed at the incarnation.

### **5.2.2 The Immaculate Conception**

Without evaluating the Roman Catholic claims about the so-called ‘immaculate conception’, I must state that this is an area that differentiates the Roman Catholic Christology from Evangelical Christology. The ‘immaculate conception’ is the Roman Catholic doctrine of how God ensured that Jesus Christ did not inherit original sin. Thus, to appreciate this doctrine, it is important to understand how the Roman Catholic Church understands original sin.

### **5.2.2.1 Original Sin in Roman Catholic Thought**

While the doctrine of original sin can be traced to the works of the Greek Fathers such as Irenaeus (120-202) and Origen (ca. 185-254), and to the Latin Fathers such as Tertullian (ca.160-215), Ambrose (339-397) and Ambrosiaster (4<sup>th</sup> century), in this study I have decided to only refer to Augustine (354-430). However, the Augustinian definition of original sin will be preceded by a summary of the thoughts of both the Greek and Latin Fathers. The Greek Fathers taught that all of Adam's descendants inherited his fallen, sinful human nature, but no guilt is attached to it, and, like the Greek Fathers, the Latin Fathers before Augustine taught that death and original corruption are the results of man's participation in Adam's sin (Pfandl 1990:9, 11).

The current Roman Catholic view of original sin is to a great degree actually the one formulated by Augustine. Augustine taught that Adam transmitted his fallen nature (guilt and corruption) to his posterity through sexual procreation (Pfandl 1990:10). Thus, humankind, separated from God, burdened with guilt, and under the dominion of evil, cannot do that which is good in the sight of God, that is, that which springs from the motive of love to God and fellow human beings. It is not part of our fallen, sinful human nature to want to do what God commands in His word. We are born destitute of that natural goodness, which Adam and Eve were endowed with at creation. We are all born spiritually dead.

Chapman (1994:90-91) observes that, following the teaching of Paul, the Christian Church has always believed and taught that the overwhelming misery, which enslaves and oppresses men and women and their inclination towards wrongdoing, cannot be understood without our connection with the original sin of Adam and the fact that he endowed us with the tendency to sin, with which all human beings are born afflicted – a sin which is actually the 'death of a soul'.

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? In Roman Catholic theology, the whole human race is in Adam 'as one body of one man', thus, by this unity of the human race, all men and women are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated

in Jesus Christ's justice (Chapman 1994:91). It has been observed that by succumbing to the tempter's voice, the first human beings committed a personal sin, which affected the human nature in such a way that Adam and Eve would then transmit a fallen state to their descendants (Council of Trent 1546; cf. Chapman 1994:91). The point to note is that, in Roman Catholic theology, parents transmit a fallen state to their descendants.

Original sin is a sin which is transmitted by propagation to all humankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. For this reason, what Roman Catholics call 'original sin', is a sin which is seemingly only in an analogical sense: It is a sin 'contracted' and not 'committed' – a state and not an act (Chapman 1994:91).

Even with this elaborate explanation of how original sin is transmitted, Chapman (1994:91) does admit on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church that the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. He also makes an insightful comment regarding the current Roman Catholic understanding of original sin. He asserts that, even though it is proper to each individual (*Council of Trent* 1546), the so-called original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants, for Adam's descendants did not sin in the manner in which their ancestor did (Chapman 1994:92). Original sin is that state of lacking the holiness and justice that God endowed Adam and Eve with at creation. It must be noted, however, that the human nature has not been totally corrupted or depraved: The natural powers proper to it have been wounded – it is subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to wrongdoing – a tendency to sin that is called 'concupiscence' (Chapman 1994:91).

According to the Roman Catholic theology, baptism has the effect of erasing original sin. In this light, Chapman (1994:91) states that baptism, by imparting the life of Jesus' grace, takes away original sin and turns a person back towards God. He observes, however, that the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to wrongdoing, persist in Jesus' followers and summon them to spiritual battle, which battle continues throughout their

earthly pilgrimage. Because of the nature of original sin, as understood by the Roman Catholic Church, Mary therefore needed to be qualified to become the mother of Jesus.

### **5.2.2.2 Mary's Qualification**

It would appear in Roman Catholic Christology that in order for Mary to become the mother of the Saviour, she had to be qualified in a special way. There is no doubt in the Roman Catholic Christology that this qualification took Mary outside normal human existence in sinful flesh. It has been asserted that to become the mother of the Saviour, Mary was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role and in order for her to be able to give the free assent of her faith to her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace (Chapman 1994:109, 110). There is need to observe, however, that the Roman Catholic Church suggests more than simply God favouring Mary for the purpose of being the mother of His incarnate Son. Mary did not inherit original sin, which is the lot of all fallen human beings since Adam and Eve fell into sin.

One special gift that Mary received from God, according to the Roman Catholic Christology, was being redeemed from the moment of her conception. In this light, Chapman (1994:110) asserts that, for centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has become ever more aware that God, through His grace, redeemed Mary right at conception. This is what the dogma of the immaculate conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: 'The Most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin' (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* [1854]; cf. Chapman 1994:110).

In their council held from 1962 to 1965, the Roman Catholic Church insightfully observed that the holy Fathers of the Christian Church expressed belief that Mary was entirely holy and free from all stains of sin, and that she was fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new creature – adorned from the moment of her conception with splendours of an entirely unique conception (Vatican II [1962-1965] 1967:88). Since in Roman Catholic thought, tradition complements biblical teaching, the belief and confession of the holy Fathers, is



accepted as a deposit of faith, which all the faithful must confess. In other words, all the faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church confess their faith in the immaculate conception of Mary – free from all stains of sin from the moment she was conceived in her mother’s womb.

It has been asserted that the immaculate conception means that Mary, whose conception in her mother’s womb was brought about the normal way, that is, by sexual reproduction, was conceived without a stain of sin (Catholic.com sa.). The term ‘immaculate’ means ‘without stain’. In the Roman Catholic theology, the essence of original sin consists in the deprivation of sanctifying grace and its stain is a corrupt nature. This is the common lot of all descendants of Adam and Eve. However, Mary was preserved from these defects by God’s grace. This means that, from the moment she was conceived in her mother’s womb, she was in a state of sanctifying grace and was therefore free from the corrupt nature that original sin brings to all descendants of Adam and Eve.

It is also asserted in the Roman Catholic theology that Mary was enriched with the splendour of an entirely unique holiness just when she was conceived in her mother’s womb, and that unique holiness came from her Son, Jesus Christ, in preparation for His own conception, which was yet to take place (Chapman 1994:110). Mary was saved by the merits of the blood of her holy Son (Chapman 1994:110). It appears that in the Roman Catholic theology, God blessed Mary more than any other created person with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and chose her, in Jesus, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love (Eph 1:3-4). The point of this argument is that Jesus Christ redeemed His mother – before He was even incarnated in her womb – with a special kind of redemption, which God reserved only for Mary. The Holy Trinity did this in order for the Son of God to be born without original sin.

Mary is called the ‘Mother of God’, ‘the All-Holy’ (*Panagia*) by the Fathers of the Eastern tradition, who celebrated her as free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature. It is further argued that, by the grace of God, she remained free from every personal sin her whole life long (Chapman 1994:110).

Roman Catholic theology suggests that God's gift of sinlessness to Mary continued throughout her life. It must be noted, for purposes of this study, that the doctrine of the immaculate conception does not refer to Jesus Christ's conception in Mary's womb, but to Mary's conception in her mother's womb, and suggests that she was not infected by inherited depravity or corruption (Grudem 2015:531).

Thus, in Roman Catholic theology, in order for Jesus to be born free from inherited sin, His mother had to be born free from that sin. This is the logical way that the Roman Catholic theology exempts Jesus from inherited sin. It would appear that, in Roman Catholic thought, the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary is indispensable.

However, the Protestant theologians have objected to the doctrine of the immaculate conception. Grudem (2015:531), for instance, argues that the Bible nowhere suggests that Mary was free from the tendency to sin, which all human beings inherit from their parents. Even the Roman Catholic theologian, Ott (1960:200), is of the view that the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary is not explicitly revealed in Scripture, though he thinks that it is implicit in Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28 and 41. In other words, the Roman Catholic Church formulated this doctrine regarding how Mary was conceived in her mother's womb not based on an explicit biblical text, but on a supposed implication of texts such as the two mentioned here. It is important at this point to find out how Jesus was conceived – Roman Catholic Christology suggests the virginal conception.

### **5.2.3 The Virginal Conception and Mary's Perpetual Virginity**

The Roman Catholic Christology emphasises the uniqueness of the human nature of Jesus by teaching the biblical truth of the virginal conception (cf. Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35). Chapman (1994:111) states that, from the time the Roman Catholic Church first made formulations of its faith, it confessed that Jesus Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a woman who was a virgin. The Roman Catholic Church also affirmed early in its history, the corporeal nature of this event, whereby Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb without human seed. Thus, the incarnation was not about natural biological processes, but about God's mystery of all ages.

I should mention that in Roman Catholic theology, the virginal conception is seen as the sign that it was truly God who took human nature. The Roman Catholic theology is very clear in its position that the accounts presented by Matthew and Luke suggest the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility. The virginal conception was a unique and unrepeatable event, which will make us marvel for all ages. Mary conceived without the involvement of a human father, for her conception was by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It would appear, however, that the Roman Catholic Church is not content to simply state that Mary conceived without the involvement of a man. The church also teaches that Mary remained a virgin throughout her life, for, according to them, she did not have any sexual relations with Joseph after Jesus was born. It should thus be noted that the deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Roman Catholic Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made human. In fact, it is argued in the Roman Catholic theology that Jesus' birth did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it. And so, the liturgy of the church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the 'Ever-virgin' (Chapman 1994:112).

Some Protestant and Anglican scholars have, however, objected to the Roman Catholic teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary. For instance, *The Interpreters Bible*, when explaining the passage of Luke 8:19, has this plain comment: 'There is no reason to suppose that the brothers [of Jesus] here are not brothers in the usual sense of the word' (*The Interpreter's Bible* 1978:153).

The argument from the Protestant world seems to be that the brothers of Jesus were probably the sons of Mary and Joseph born after the birth of Jesus. If this is the case, then Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born, but married afterwards. She enjoyed a normal married life with her husband, Joseph, until he died. Hargreaves (1991:69-70) makes this observation, which is true about the Roman Catholic theology:

Those who believe that Mary was always a virgin say that these men were the cousins of Jesus, or that they were sons of Joseph

by a former wife who died before he married Mary. They remind us that in Palestine (as in many countries of Asia and Africa today) the word 'brother' could be used for cousins.

Protestant theologians do not accept this explanation. Instead, they believe that Mary and Joseph had children from their union. Hurtado (1989:69-70), for instance, argues that the most natural reading of references such as Luke 8:19 is to understand that Jesus' parents had several children, which the Roman Catholic dogma and Eastern Orthodox tradition simply reject. It is Hurtado's contention that the tradition that Mary was not only a virgin at Jesus' conception, but remained perpetually so, never having sexual relations with Joseph throughout the existence of their marriage and, therefore, never having children other than Jesus, arose in the early centuries of the Christian Church when the emphasis on asceticism was developing into a movement in the church and became an official teaching of Roman and Eastern bodies later.

Roman Catholic theologians have not left the Protestant challenge to their theology without response. I will highlight the response given by Marist Brother, Bigotto. He responds by appealing to Scripture as well as to history. Bigotto (2000:40-41) responds to Hurtado's rebuttal and challenge by stating that he is surprised that the latter forgets that Philip, one of the seven deacons, in Acts, had four virgin daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9), a clear sign of consecration. He argues that Hurtado forgets that Jesus recognised that some accept to remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matt 19:11-12) – another sign that there were already people consecrating themselves totally to God during Jesus' ministry. Bigotto is of the view that Hurtado would have understood the perpetual virginity of Mary if he had not forgotten how Paul spoke about marriage and virginity in 1 Corinthians 7. It is his contention that Hurtado's rebuttal to the Roman Catholic belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is because he forgets that Ignatius of Antioch (107 AD), Justin (155 AD), and Irenaeus (202 AD), well before the start of monachism, called Mary a virgin. Bigotto laments that Hurtado forgets that the Proto-evangelium of James (150 AD) tries to answer this question by making of the brothers of Jesus the sons of Joseph in a previous marriage. Indeed, Hurtado forgets the way of life

Jesus lived, totally consecrated to the Father. In Bigotto's opinion, asceticism started only in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, long after some people had already lived lives of total consecration to God in their virginity.

From the foregoing arguments, it is important to observe that Bigotto finds it difficult to accept the Protestant argument, which is propagated by Hunter (1972:52), that the brothers mentioned in Luke 8:19 were not Jesus' cousins (Jerome's view) or his half-brothers (Epiphonian view), but his real brothers, the younger sons of Mary, who married Joseph after Jesus was born. He argues that this is a new thinking, in contradiction with the mainstream of tradition and with the faith of the majority of the main churches of today. It is not my intention to take a position on either side of the debate. For now, I will turn to Jesus' sinlessness as understood in the Roman Catholic Christology.

#### **5.2.4 Jesus Christ's Sinlessness**

As I have already noted above, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that human beings inherit corruption from their parents, which is known in Catholic and some Protestant wings of Christianity as original sin. The question then is: How was Jesus born sinless if all human beings born after the fall of Adam and Eve inherit original sin? This is certainly a difficult question to answer. However, Roman Catholic theology has given a response, which is very crucial to this study, for the three representative Christologists in this study grapple with the question of how Jesus escaped inheritance of original sin. Thus, I will refer to the solution proposed by the Roman Catholic Church in the evaluation chapters, especially as I evaluate the Christological views of Erickson and Gulley.

Since the Roman Catholic Church teaches the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary, it has not found it difficult to respond to this question. It would appear that the Roman Catholic line of thought goes like this: If Mary was conceived in her mother's womb without inheriting original sin, then Jesus, who was conceived in her womb, was equally born without sin in His human nature. In fact, in Roman Catholic Christology, the doctrine of the immaculate conception is indispensable, for it prepares the way for the sinlessness of Jesus Christ in His human nature.

There is another way in which the Roman Catholic Christology preserves the sinlessness of Jesus: They point to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. In this light, Chapman (1994:108) asserts that the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord, the giver of life, was sent to sanctify Mary's womb and divinely make it fertile (fecundate it), thus causing her to conceive Jesus in a humanity drawn from her own. Of course, Roman Catholic theology does not explain how this conception took place. It is not explained whether or not God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum. It is also not explained whether or not God simply created Jesus' body using a material taken from Mary's ovum, without the ovum necessarily getting fertilised. It would appear that in Roman Catholic Christology, it suffices that God made it possible for Jesus Christ to be conceived in Mary's womb. The Roman Catholic Christologists leave the mystery of the incarnation of God where they find it in God's word (Luke 1:35).

The Roman Catholic Christological view regarding how God preserved the sinlessness of Jesus Christ suggests that the Holy Spirit played two roles in the incarnation. First, He sanctified Mary's womb, and second, He made Mary's womb fertile, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of God. It should be observed that Jesus was conceived in a humanity drawn from Mary's own.

With respect to Jesus Christ's sinlessness, it can be said that, since the Holy Spirit, as argued by the Roman Catholic theology, sanctified Mary's womb, then Jesus was conceived without original sin. However, I need to ask the Roman Catholic Christologists why the Holy Spirit had to sanctify Mary's womb if she was herself immaculately conceived, as the church teaches. Did the Holy Spirit have to sanctify what was already holy? Was it not enough that Mary was herself born without original sin? These are questions that need satisfactory answers. However, I will not explore these questions in this chapter. I will refer to them when evaluating the Christological views of Erickson and Gulley, for I assume that the line of thought presented in their Christologies parallels that of the Roman Catholic Church.

There is no question as to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches with respect to Jesus Christ's sinlessness in terms of performance. Jesus kept His Father's law perfectly. For this reason, I will not explore the Roman Catholic thought on Jesus Christ's sinless performance in His incarnational life.

Eastern Orthodox Christology has, in my view, influenced some of the Christological views, especially those espoused by Sequeira. For this reason, it is important that I briefly review what is taught in Eastern Orthodox Christology.

### **5.3 Eastern Orthodox Christology**

I have decided to discuss Eastern Orthodox Christology by first giving a brief historical background. Then, I will outline the Eastern Orthodox view of Jesus' humanity and deification. Thereafter, I will point out objections, which have been raised to Eastern Orthodox Christology.

#### **5.3.1 Historical Background**

The Eastern Orthodox Church, which is currently present in different countries, claims to be as ancient as the Roman Catholic Church, having departed from Catholicism in 1054 AD over doctrinal and hierarchical differences (Gulley 2012:726). Thus, the Eastern Orthodox Christology, as the Roman Catholic Christology, goes way back to the ontological or classical Christological debates of the early centuries, and especially to the thinking of Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Athanasius, and John the Damascene. In fact, Athanasius influenced the teachings of the Orthodox Church in the East. It must be noted that there are almost no Orthodox systematic theologies. The exception is the very important work, the *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* by John of Damascus (675-754). As Clendenin (2003:53) has observed, the focus of Orthodox theology is adoration rather than analysis. In Orthodox theology, mystery is more important than Scripture, for it rejects *sola Scriptura*, placing tradition before Scripture (Clendenin 2003:106-107, 115). What are the Christological views of Eastern Orthodox Christianity?

### 5.3.2 The Human Nature of Jesus and Deification

Athanasius taught that Christology had to do with who Jesus was (His Person) in saving humanity. In this light, Hill (2006:84) asserts that just like most thinkers of the Christian Church of this period, Athanasius taught that Jesus saved people primarily through who He was, and not necessarily through His work. Thus, this teaching does not focus on Jesus' work, which He accomplished through His doing, His dying on Calvary's cross, and His resurrection.

What is the Eastern Orthodox view of the human nature of Jesus? Gulley (2012:607) states: 'Eastern Orthodox theology claims that Jesus took our fallen, sinful human nature in order to join it to His holy, sinless, divine nature, and in His divinity changed that human nature in a process that brought salvation to it (*theosis*)'.

Eastern Orthodox Christology, following Athanasius' view, has for many years held that, when Jesus assumed our sinful human nature, He divinised it. How is deification defined? Deification (*theosis*) in Greek was coined by Gregory of Nazianzus, bishop of Constantinople in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Finian & Kharlamov 2006:1). It is contemporary Orthodox bishop Ware (2001:22-23) who explains what deification means:

By virtue of this distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies, we are able to affirm the possibility of a direct or mystical union between man and God – what the Greek Fathers term the *theosis* of man, his 'deification' – but at the same time we exclude any pantheistic identification between the two: for man participates in the energies of God, not in the essence. There is union, but not fusion or confusion.

Athanasius (Schaff 1885f:45, 65) taught that, while Jesus was in the body of Mary, 'He sanctified the body', and that 'He was made man that we might be made God'. This view was earlier taught by Irenaeus (Schaff 1885a:526), who said that the Son of God, 'through His transcendent love, became what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He



is Himself'. Theologians have called this atonement the 'mystical theory' (cf. e.g. Berkhof 1996:389-390).

It must be emphasised that, in Athanasius' opinion, the sinful nature of humans was assumed by Jesus in His incarnation, otherwise the sinful human nature could not be redeemed. This implies that, if Jesus had not assumed our sinful nature, the unassumed would have remained unredeemed. This same fundamental principle is noted in the following statement: '*The unassumed is unredeemed* (Gregory of Nazianzus)', or '*What Christ has not assumed has not been saved* (Cyril of Alexandria)' (Torrance 2009:441; original emphasis). Thus, the redemption process was within Jesus Christ, between the two natures of the God-Man, the divinity transforming the fallen humanity Jesus assumed (Gulley 2012:607). In this internal process of salvation, Jesus was not affected by the sinful nature, but the sinful nature was affected by His divine nature and so redemption was carried out by the divine nature of Jesus.

To appreciate the relationship between the human nature that Jesus assumed and what happened to humanity, I need to say something more about deification as taught in the Eastern Orthodox Christology. Palamas (1983:76) suggests that the transformation of our human nature, in deification, was accomplished in Jesus Christ from the start, from the very instant He took upon His divine nature our human nature.

Another theologian, Mantzaridis (1984:29), argues that the consequence of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Jesus Christ was the deification of the human nature He assumed. The deified human nature in Jesus, therefore, is 'an inexhaustible source, transmitting this divinising energy to men and thereby deifying them' (Palamas 1983:33). Mantzaridis (1984:117) predicts: 'The process of man's deification, begun in this life, becomes perfect, and irreversible in the age to come'. This implies that when human beings become deified, they will eternally remain in that state. Thus, Jesus' work on earth was really an indispensable work. If He had not become human, human beings would not have any hope for deification.

### 5.3.3 Objections to Eastern Orthodox Christology

Theologians such as Gulley have objected to the Christological views of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It has been observed that, if Jesus' human nature was divinised, this would have disqualified Him on two levels from being our Saviour: Level one has to do with the purpose of His human life, while level two has to do with His present ministry in the sanctuary in heaven (Gulley 2012:728). Thus, it can be asserted that these two levels necessitated that Jesus be truly human. When God was incarnated, He truly became a human being, and not a divinised Person as Orthodox Christology suggests.

At level one: Jesus Christ, who was in God's form, did not consider it robbing God when He declared that He was equal to His Father. He, however, willingly decided to put aside the independent use of His divine power and took the form of a servant, and came in the 'likeness of men' (ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων) (Phil 2:6-7). It was to perfect a human character to give to humans as their robe of righteousness, His sinless character in place of their sinful character (Is 61:10), that Jesus became a human being. It is in this way that He is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). Jesus also needed to be truly human (mortal, not immortal) so that He could die a substitutionary death and pay the penalty of sin. Had His humanity been divinised, He would not have died the substitutionary death that the Bible claims He died, for He would have been immortal.

The idea that Jesus' humanity was divinised, questions the doctrine of justification by faith. The Eastern Orthodox *theosis*, or divinised humanity, suggests more than imputed righteousness; it includes imparted righteousness (Gulley 2012:728).

As earlier noted, level two has to do with Jesus' priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, which the author of the letter to the Hebrews referred to in Hebrews 4:15-16. A divinised humanity would disqualify Jesus from being our understanding High Priest today, and had He lived on earth as God, He would not have qualified to serve as mediator between God and humanity (Gulley 2012:729). He would not have known what it meant to live as a human being, and He would not have bridged the huge gulf between God and humanity if He was merely a divine and divinised human.

Deification is a philosophical view derived from human thinking, focusing on what human beings guess took place when the divine and human united in Jesus Christ (Gulley 2012:729). Gulley suggests that these Orthodox assumptions are not in agreement with Scripture. He observes that when one critically analyses the Eastern Orthodox Christology, one discovers that it is less relational than the relational Trinity revealed in Scripture. For instance, Jesus in His divinised humanity remains a 'wholly other' God, removed from the reality of being fully human, and this is not a biblical incarnation that united a fully-God nature with a fully-human one. Thus, it has been argued that, in spite of its good intentions, the incarnation taught in Eastern Orthodoxy seems to be only a mechanical replacement for the genuine coming of Jesus Christ into human history, to reveal God's unconditional, self-sacrificing, and eternal love, for the world He longed to save even before He became human, as the Bible teaches (Gulley 2012:730).

Another problem with the Eastern Orthodox Christology is that its proponents teach that creation was the first step towards incarnation, suggesting that the incarnation would have taken place even if human beings had not fallen. In this light, Nellas (1997:32-33) argues:

The union of God and man 'according to energy' which was granted to [humankind] with the creation of Adam 'in the image' had as its aim the leading of human nature to hypostatic union with the divine Logos in Christ. This aim constituted the original destiny of Adam and remained permanent and immutable – 'for the counsels of the Lord are not repented of' – even after the fall.

As already noted above, it is taught in Eastern Orthodox Christology that Jesus' incarnation would have taken place even if there had been no sin. In other words, the creation of humans was only complete in the incarnational union of God and humanity. However, if this were the case, then the sacrifice in Jesus becoming human was diminished (Gulley 2012:730). To my mind, one will search Scripture in vain to find the Eastern Orthodox view of the incarnation, for it is absent in Scripture and contradicts Scripture that creation was completed (Gen 2:1-3).

It will also be observed that the biblical plan of salvation is questioned by the divinisation of the humanity of Jesus, for Jesus is disqualified from producing a robe of righteousness and being a sympathetic High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. There is a need to point out that even though the cross is part of Eastern Orthodox Christology, it is arguable that the great exchange took place between God and humans at the cross and not before, for at Calvary, God placed our sins on His holy Son, and as such, Jesus Christ became the very sin that excluded us from God, and we became the very righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). It was not at the incarnation that the great exchange took place – it was at the cross – and deification of humans is never mentioned in Scripture (Gulley 2012:730).

Eastern Orthodox Christology can be summarised by stating that Jesus took upon His holy, divine nature, our fallen, sinful human nature. He did this in order for the fallen humanity to be deified. He was made a man that we might be made God. Creation was prerequisite to the incarnation, and the creation of human beings was only completed in the incarnation, for God intended that humankind should be deified through the incarnation. Thus, the incarnation would have taken place even if human beings had not fallen into sin.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The Roman Catholic Christology traces its origins to the ontological debates of the first five centuries of the Christian church. Roman Catholics believe that Jesus had two distinct natures: A divine and a human nature. Mary was conceived in her mother's womb without sin and was also redeemed even before Jesus was born. Since Mary was born without sin, Jesus was equally conceived in her womb, and later born without sin. The Holy Spirit sanctified and fecundated Mary's womb. Thus, in the Roman Catholic Christology, Jesus was born sinless in nature. While on earth, He lived a sinless life.

On the other hand, in the Eastern Orthodox Christology, it is taught that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature in order for human beings to be deified. It is argued that if Jesus had not assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, human beings would not have been saved, since it was only that which was assumed that could be saved. When Jesus

assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, that nature was divinised. It did not pollute His divine nature but was instead itself healed. Thus, salvation in the Eastern Orthodox Christology was achieved internally and not externally. It was more of a subjective salvation than an objective salvation.

Both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christologies have probably influenced the Christological views of the theologians selected for evaluation in this study. I will therefore later refer to these Christologies.

# CHAPTER 6

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: EVANGELICAL AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHRISTOLOGIES

### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christologies. I noted that the Christologists I have selected for study were probably influenced by both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christologies in the formulation of their Christological models. In other words, since these two are the oldest denominations that trace their Christological views to the Christological debates of the first five centuries of the Christian era, a study of this nature would be incomplete without making reference to their Christological views. Thus, it was necessary to review the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christologies in preparation for a contextual evaluation of the Christological views of the selected Christologists.

During the Reformation, the Christian Church experienced a major split, which is still prevalent today. This split witnessed the birth of Protestant Churches, which emphasised personal salvation, and put the cross of Jesus at the centre of their Christian doctrine. The Protestant Reformation put Scripture above tradition and emphasised the message of righteousness by faith. Nevertheless, Protestant theologians hold varying views of the human nature of Jesus. For instance, Schleiermacher (1768-1834) taught that Jesus assumed a *sin/less* human nature (Schleiermacher [1830] 1999:413-417). On the other hand, Barth (1886-1968) argued that Jesus assumed a *sinful* human nature (Barth 1958: 481). It is for this reason that, instead of reviewing Protestant Christology in general, I have decided to review Evangelical Christology. It is Evangelical Christology that sets the stage for Erickson's Christology. It will be seen later that even Gulley's Christology can be traced to Evangelical Christology. Thus, in what follows, I will review Evangelical and SDA Christologies. The aim is to lay a foundation for a contextual evaluation of the Christological views of the selected scholars.

## **6.2 Evangelical Christology**

I will first briefly give a historical background to evangelical Christianity. Then I will select two evangelical Christologists whose views represent the views of other Evangelical theologians. Although Seventh-day Adventists claim to be evangelical, I have, for the purposes of this study, decided not to include them on the list of evangelicals. This is because the SDA Church is believed by other evangelicals such as Fiedler (2015a:33), to have a distinct theology. In fact, according to Zurcher (1999:155-165), one reason why the SDA Church revised its Christological position, was because other evangelicals had accused it of teaching a view of Jesus' human nature that, in their opinion, disparaged His Person. Thus, the SDA Christology deserves a separate treatment in this chapter.

### **6.2.1 Historical Background**

According to Hill (2006:338), the term 'evangelical', which comes from the Greek term for 'gospel', is now a much over-used and increasingly ambiguous term. He argues that in continental Europe the term 'evangelical' has traditionally been used simply as a synonym for 'Protestant', but in the English-speaking world it has been used more narrowly to refer to those who shared the theological and moral concerns of the revivalists. Thus, it can be argued that the term 'evangelical' has its roots in the European and American revivals. The revivalists shared many concerns with other non-English-speaking groups, such as the Pietists, but it is not normal to call the latter 'evangelicals', although it would not be much of a misnomer.

It is important to note that evangelical views were very widespread by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were especially strong among the various Dissenting churches, particularly the Baptists and the Methodists (Hill 2006:338). In fact, the Methodists came into being as an Evangelical breakaway group from the Church of England, inspired by the teachings of John Wesley and others. However, many with similar theological views remained within the Church of England, effectively a party within that church, a powerful one which had inherited the concerns of the earlier Puritan party but with more of an interest in the personal experience of each individual believer. Evangelicals, both inside

and outside the Church of England, played a major role in religious life after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially in overseas missions.

Evangelical churches have some beliefs in common, which identify them with one another. Of particular interest to me is the role of personal experience, and the individual's relationship with Jesus. It would appear that Evangelical churches share similar views of the human nature of Jesus. For the purposes of this study, I will review the Christological views of Henry C. Thiessen and Wayne Grudem, both Evangelical theologians. My assumption is that these representative theologians share similar Christological views with Erickson. I also assume that Gulley holds Christological views in common with Evangelicals, for he has identified himself as an Evangelical Christian. Of course, this will have to be proven in this study.

### **6.2.2 Representative Evangelical Christological Views**

As I have noted above, evangelical Christians of various denominations have some beliefs in common. Fiedler (2015b:350) suggests the following common beliefs: 1) Emphasis on the Bible; 2) emphasis on personal salvation; 3) emphasis on missions/ evangelism; and 4) emphasis on the translation of faith into action. For the purposes of this study, I only focus on Christological views, which I limit to two representative Christologists. It is my view that Christology is a topic of study in the Evangelical quest for personal salvation, for our Christological views determine to a great extent our views of personal salvation. In fact, there are arguments in SDA circles that our Christological views determine our experience of salvation. Donkor (2005:15), for instance, opines that the post-fall view of Jesus Christ's human nature tends to produce legalism or perfectionistic inclinations for its advocates. Thus, some SDA scholars reject the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature because of the allegation that it tends to produce legalistic Christians. It must be noted that if that were true, it would negate the Evangelical emphasis on personal salvation, which is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. In any case, whether or not the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity produces legalistic Christians, will have to be confirmed through this study. I will focus on this allegation when evaluating the Christological views of Sequeira and Gulley.



### **6.2.2.1 The Christological View of Henry Clarence Thiessen (1883-1947)**

In order to appreciate the Christological view of Thiessen, it is important to begin with a brief biographical sketch. After giving this biographical sketch, I will proceed to discuss his view of Jesus' human nature.

#### *6.2.2.1.1 Biographical Sketch*

Henry Clarence Thiessen was born in 1883 in Nebraska. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord and got baptised at the age of 17. Desiring to learn more of Jesus, he entered the Bible Training School in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, after which he pastored for seven years in Ohio. He later became principal at the Bible Training School. He then went to study at the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He later went to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for graduate studies and majored in New Testament Greek. Thereafter he became Dean of the College of Theology at the Evangelical College in New Jersey. In 1931 he was hired by the Dallas Theological Seminary, where he taught New Testament Literature and Exegesis. He went to teach at Wheaton College in 1935 where he became Professor of Bible and Philosophy. In 1936 he was appointed chairman of the Bible and Theology Department. He died in 1947.

#### *6.2.2.1.2 The Human Nature of Jesus*

There are no questions regarding Thiessen's belief in the humanness of Jesus Christ. He clearly states that Jesus had a human birth, a human development, the essential elements of human nature, human names, the sinless infirmities of human nature, and is repeatedly called a man (Thiessen 1979:219-222). All these characteristics clearly suggest that Jesus was a human being like all other human beings. However, while Thiessen suggests that Jesus was a human being like all other human beings, he argues that Jesus was different from them because He was sinless.

#### *6.2.2.1.3 Jesus' Sinlessness*

While all human beings inherit a fallen nature from their parents, in Thiessen's view, Jesus did not inherit this leaning or tendency toward sin. He argues: 'Through the miraculous

overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was born sinless' (Thiessen 1979:220). Thus, in Thiessen's opinion, it was the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit that prevented transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus Christ.

According to Thiessen (1979:225), Jesus was holy in nature, for the prince of this world had nothing in Him (John 14:30), and He was 'without sin' (Heb 4:15). He was holy also in conduct, for He was separate from sinners (Heb 7:26). He always did the things that were well-pleasing to His Father (John 8:29). It is Thiessen's contention that 'Christ is our example of sinless perfection, and it is nothing short of absolute perfection' (John 8:29).

Thiessen believes that Jesus was unique. Therefore, in what follows I review his view of Jesus' uniqueness.

#### *6.2.2.1.4 Jesus' Uniqueness*

Jesus' uniqueness, in Thiessen's opinion, is first and foremost, to be found in His being one Person with two natures. It is this uniqueness of Jesus that makes the study of His Person very difficult to achieve (Thiessen 1979:222).

Jesus' uniqueness is also to be found in His having been conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), and in being born sinless. He is the only human being who was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. His uniqueness also lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit miraculously prevented transmission of sin from Mary to Him. In this light, Thiessen (1979:221) observes that, in saying that Jesus Christ took our nature, we must always distinguish between a human nature and a sinful nature. This is because Jesus had the former, while we have the latter. In other words, Thiessen is of the view that Jesus Christ did not assume a sinful nature.

However, Thiessen (1979:221) asserts that Jesus had sinless infirmities of human nature, including the following: He was weary (John 4:6); hungry (Matt 4:2; 21:18); thirsty (John 19:28); He slept (Matt 8:24; cf. Ps 121:4); He was tempted (Heb 2:18; 4:15; cf. James 1:13); He was dependent upon His Father for strength (Mark 1:35; John 6:15; Heb 5:7);

He wrought miracles (Matt 12:28), taught (Acts 1:2), and offered Himself to God by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38; Heb 9:14).

Thiessen (1979:221) reminds all theologians: 'Again, it must be borne in mind that to speak of the infirmities of Jesus' nature does not imply sinful infirmities'. He does, however, not state that by sinless infirmities, he means physical weaknesses. Finally, it would appear that in Thiessen's view, Jesus was unique because, while we have all sinned, He did not sin.

To summarise, Thiessen believes that Jesus assumed both an unfallen spiritual human nature and a weak (fallen) physical human nature. The Holy Spirit miraculously prevented the transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus. Jesus lived an absolutely perfect life – leaving us an example of sinless living. He was unique, because He had two natures: A divine and a human nature. He was also unique, because He took both an unfallen spiritual nature and a weak (fallen) physical nature. His uniqueness also includes that He did not commit any sin throughout His earthly life.

As I noted above, Grudem is another Evangelical Christologist whose view of Jesus' human nature is worth reviewing in this study. I turn to his Christological view in what follows.

### **6.2.2.2 The Christological View of Wayne Grudem**

Just as I did when reviewing Thiessen's Christological views, I will first give a brief biographical sketch of Grudem, and then proceed to look at his view of the human nature of Jesus and His sinlessness.

#### *6.2.2.2.1 Biographical Sketch*

Born on 11 February 1948 in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, Wayne Grudem is an Evangelical Baptist and a systematic theologian. He is research professor of Bible and theology at the Phoenix Seminary, Scottsdale, Arizona. Previously he taught for twenty years at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. He holds degrees from

Harvard (BA), Westminster Seminary (M.Div.) and Cambridge (PhD), and is a past president of the Evangelical Theological Society. He is the author of a number of books. For the purposes of this study, I will review his Christological views in his book *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grudem 2015).

#### 6.2.2.2.2 *The Human Nature of Jesus*

According to Grudem (2015:532-535), Jesus was a real human being, for He had a human body, a human mind, a human soul and human emotions, and people near Him saw Him as a human being. Jesus was born just as all human babies are born (Luke 2:7). He grew through childhood to adulthood just as other children grow (Luke 2:40). The Bible states that 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men' (Luke 2:52). Jesus got tired (John 4:6) just as we do. He became thirsty (John 19:28), just as we all do. He got hungry (Matt 4:2), just as we do. After He had fasted for forty days, an angel had to come and take care of Him (Matt 4:11), just as we need to be taken care of. The soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross (Luke 23:26), most likely because He was so weak following the beating, He had received that He did not have strength enough to carry it Himself. The culmination of Jesus' limitations in terms of His human body is seen when He died on the cross (Luke 23:46). His body became lifeless just as our bodies do when we die.

Grudem (2015:532) also sees proof of Jesus' being human in the fact that He rose from the dead in a physical, human body, though one that was made perfect and was no longer subject to weakness, disease, or death. After His resurrection, Jesus repeatedly demonstrated to His disciples that He was a real human being, stating, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have' (Luke 24:39). Another evidence of the fact that He was a real human being was that 'they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence' (Luke 24:42; cf. 30; John 20:17, 20, 27; 21:9, 13).

It was in this same human body (though as resurrection body it was made perfect) that Jesus also ascended to heaven, and the way in which He ascended to heaven seems to

have been calculated to demonstrate the continuity between His existence in a physical body here on earth and His continuing existence in that body in heaven (cf. John 16:28; 17:11) (Grudem 2015:533). The disciples saw Jesus going to heaven in His physical body (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9). Thus, the following conclusion is drawn:

All of these verses taken together show that, as far as Jesus' human body was concerned, it was like ours in every respect before his resurrection, and after his resurrection it was still a human body with 'flesh and bones', but made perfect, the kind of body that we will have when Christ returns and we are raised from the dead as well. Jesus continues to exist in that human body in heaven, as the ascension is designed to teach (Grudem 2015:533).

The question I need to ask at this point is: What kind of human nature did Jesus assume? Was it that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin, or was it that of Adam and Eve after they fell into sin? Was it a unique human nature? What is Grudem's view on this controversial issue? Grudem's view of the kind of human nature Jesus assumed at the incarnation is very crucial to this study.

Grudem favours the view that if Jesus' human nature had existed by itself, independent of His divine nature, then it would have been pre-fall – it would have been free from sin but nonetheless able to sin. In other words, Jesus' human nature would have been like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. In this light Grudem (2015:538-539) observes: 'But Jesus' human nature never existed apart from union with his divine nature. From the moment of his conception, he existed as truly God and truly man as well. Both his human nature and his divine nature existed united in one person'.

Thus, in Grudem's opinion, Jesus had a unique human nature. He suggests that the spiritual nature of Jesus, in as far as His human side was concerned, was that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. However, Grudem argues that this would only have been the case had Jesus possessed only a human nature. There is no doubt that he believes that Jesus' physical nature was just like that of all human beings. As already noted,

Grudem makes it clear that Jesus' body was just like ours – it needed to be perfected before He could go with it to heaven. The required perfection to Jesus' body was effected by His resurrection. He now bears a body that we will have when He returns and we are raised from the dead as well (Grudem 2015:533). But what does Grudem say about Jesus' sinlessness?

#### *6.2.2.2.3 Jesus Christ's Sinlessness*

Jesus' sinlessness is discussed by Grudem in terms of His human nature as well as His performance. With respect to His human nature, Grudem makes it clear that Jesus was born without sin. In other words, sin as nature was not transmitted to Jesus. However, how was it possible for Jesus not to receive from Mary the same sinful human nature that all human beings receive from their parents? Grudem has an answer to this. Commenting on Luke 1:35, Grudem (2015:531) opines:

Luke 1:35 connects this conception by the Holy Spirit with the holiness or moral purity of Christ, and reflection on that fact allows us to understand that through the absence of a human father, Jesus was not fully descended from Adam, and that this break in the line of descent was the method God used to bring it about that Jesus was fully human yet did not share inherited sin from Adam.

The 'break in the line of descent' from a human father (who was not there) to Jesus 'helps us to understand why legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ' (Grudem 2015:530). However, by this statement Grudem does not imply that the transmission of sin comes through the father and not the mother, for Scripture does not make such an assertion. He is simply trying to say that, in the incarnation, the unbroken line of descent from our first father was interrupted, and Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. In other words, since Jesus was not conceived the natural way, God, through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, prevented transmission of sin in nature from Mary to Jesus.

Grudem (2015:531) asks: 'But why did Jesus not inherit a sinful nature from Mary?' He responds to this question by pointing his readers to the solution offered by Roman Catholic Christology, and distinguishes that response from the one he proposes:

The Roman Catholic Church answers this question by saying that Mary herself was free from sin, but Scripture nowhere teaches this, and it would not really solve the problem anyway (for why then did Mary not inherit sin from her mother?). A better solution is to say that the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary must have prevented not only the transmission of sin from Joseph (for Jesus had no human father) but also, in a miraculous way, the transmission of sin from Mary (Grudem 2015:531-532).

Thus, in Grudem's opinion, God prevented transmission of original sin from a human father to Jesus by not allowing the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb through a human father's seed. God prevented the transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brought about the conception in Mary's womb without involvement of a human seed and prevented the transmission of original sin from Mary in a miraculous way.

With respect to Jesus' performance, Grudem (2015:535-537) is very clear that the Son of Man did not commit sin – He summons NT passages as proof of his assertion that Jesus did not commit sin. For instance, Jesus said: 'I always do those things that please Him' (John 8:29); 'I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love' (John 15:10); and 'Which of you convicts me of sin?' (John 8:46). The author of the letter to the Hebrews stated: 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15); 'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the angels' (Heb 7:26). The apostle Peter declared: '...who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth' (1 Pet 2:22). It is the beloved apostle John who says: 'And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin' (1 John 3:5). Paul has put it this way: 'For He made Him who knew no sin

to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' (2 Cor 5:21). In the book of Acts, Jesus is several times called the 'Holy One' or the 'Righteous One', or is referred to with some similar expression (cf. Acts 2:27; 3:14; 4:30; 7:52; 13:35). On the basis of these biblical passages, Grudem (2015:536) concludes: 'It is hard to deny, then, that the sinlessness of Jesus is taught clearly in all major sections of the New Testament'. Thus, there is no doubt in his Christology that Jesus assumed a spiritual nature that was sinless, and while on earth, He lived a sinless life.

To summarise, Grudem teaches that Jesus inherited the same physical body that all human beings inherit from their parents. It was a weak body just like the bodies we all have. Nevertheless, He did not inherit Adam's original sin from a human father since He did not have one. In a miraculous way, the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of original sin from Mary to Jesus. In His human life, Jesus did not commit any sin. Thus, He was a unique Person.

Since two representative Christologists selected for this study are Seventh-day Adventists, it is important that I review the SDA Christology. This will help me to determine to what extent the SDA Christology has influenced the thinking of the two Christologists. I must state that, because of the nature of the debates that have characterised the SDA Christology, I give it more coverage than I have done to Evangelical Christology. In fact, there are currently four views of Jesus' human nature in the SDA Church – these will take considerable space to review.

### **6.3 Seventh-day Adventist Christology**

The SDA Christology dates back to the thinking of the pioneers of the denomination. In terms of the divinity of Jesus, the thinking has been from Semi-Arian to full divinity of Jesus. At present, the SDA Church teaches that Jesus is God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Since this study deals with Jesus' humanity, I will not say anything more than that there is no serious controversy among SDAs with regard to the divinity of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the SDA Church is divided on the specific human nature that Jesus assumed. Knight (1987:134) puts it this way: 'The point of controversy in the Adventist



struggle focuses on whether Christ was born with a moral nature exactly like ours – with all of its sinful tendencies – or whether He was incarnated with the moral nature of the pre-fallen Adam’.

From the inception of the SDA Church to about the early 1950s, the teaching (although not in an official statement), was that Jesus assumed the fallen nature of humanity (Sequeira 1996:111). However, in 1955/1956, the SDA Church, through four prominent representative leaders, had conversations with Evangelical scholars (Adams 1994:44). These conversations resulted into the SDAs being conditionally accepted as Evangelicals, but the SDA Church itself being divided on the aspect of the human nature of Jesus. From reports that a Baptist Evangelical, after a seven-year study of Adventists had concluded: ‘To charge the majority of Adventists today with holding these heretical views is *unfair, inaccurate, and decidedly unchristian*’ (Froom 1971:423; original emphasis). This statement was made in light of the fact that the SDA theologians had told the Evangelical theologians what they thought were the correct SDA teachings. With respect to the fallen human nature position, Froom (1971:469) had stated: ‘The old Colcord minority-view note in *Bible Readings* – contending for an inherent sinful, fallen nature for Jesus – had years before been expunged because of its error’. The 1915 edition of *Bible Readings*, which was reprinted in 1936 and in 1945, stipulated unequivocally:

In His humanity Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature. If not, then He was not ‘made like unto his brethren’, was not ‘in all points tempted like as we are’, did not overcome as we have to overcome, and is not, therefore, the complete and perfect Saviour that man needs and must have to be saved (*Bible Readings for the Home Circle* 1915:115, cf. Zurcher 1999:154).

Zurcher (1999:165) observes that the first edition of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* dates back to the 1880s, which implies that the SDA’s fallen nature position can be traced back to that time. This position is no longer held by many SDA theologians today.

Whether or not Evangelicals accepted Seventh-day Adventists after the 1955/56 conversations is a highly debatable issue. One of the Evangelical leaders who participated in the conversations made a conditional statement of acceptance of Seventh-day Adventists. Dr. Barnhouse writes in the foreword to Martin's book that 'those Seventh-day Adventists who follow the Lord in the same way as their leaders who have interpreted for us the doctrinal position of their church, are to be considered true members of the body of Christ' (Martin 1960:7). My own opinion is that Seventh-day Adventists are generally still not accepted by their Evangelical brothers and sisters, because they teach other doctrines, which are not part of Evangelical beliefs. These doctrines include, *inter alia*, the investigative judgement and the Seventh-day Sabbath. What is very true about the 1955/56 SDA and Evangelical conversations is that they left the SDA Church so divided on the subject of the human nature of Jesus that reconciliation is almost an impossibility.

Gulley (2012:432-435) has identified at least four Christological views that are currently held by SDA theologians and laity. One group of SDA theologians teaches that Jesus assumed the fallen human nature both spiritually and physically, except that He started with a spiritual mind and not a carnal mind (Zurcher 1999:272). In this group we find theologians like Robert J. Wieland, Donald K. Short, Dennis Priebe, Herbert E. Douglass, Jean R. Zurcher, Ralph Larson, and others (cf. Zurcher 1999). Earlier this view was held by scholars such as Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones (cf. Waggoner 1999; Jones 2003). There is a controversy among SDA scholars as to what Ellen G. White taught. For this reason, I have decided to leave her out of this list. I will, however, review her Christological views for purposes of determining what she really taught in the context of the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity. This is because, in my view, she has influenced Adventist scholars more than any other Christologist, dead or alive. In fact, the SDA history reveals that Christologists have wrestled with her Christological views, which she did not develop in a systematic manner.

Another group of SDA theologians, mainly the theologians who compiled the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (1957), emphasise that Jesus took Adam's sinless human nature before the fall (Fortin sa.:1). In this group we have the

following theologians: Roy Allan Anderson, W.E. Read, and others (Fortin sa.:1). Currently very few people still hold this view as most prelapsarian proponents in the SDA Church now belong to the third group. It is in fact debatable whether or not there has been any Adventist Christologist who has held a strictly prelapsarian view.

A third group of theologians (and lay members) emphasises that, although Jesus' nature was fully human and that he could yield to temptations, Jesus did not inherit our inner inclinations and predispositions to sin. With respect to this position, Fortin (sa.:1-2) declares: 'This prelapsarian position holds that a predisposition to sin is not inherent to humanity and that Jesus as the second Adam could not have any inner tendency to sin'.

It should be noted that, while Fortin calls this position 'prelapsarian', Zurcher (1999:273) calls it the 'alternative Christology'. This position is currently found in the books *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005) and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000). Proponents of the alternative Christology include Webster, Dederen, Adams, and others (cf. Webster 1984:451; Adams 1994:69; Zurcher 1999:246-255). Heppenstall seems to teach the alternative Christology (cf. Zurcher 1999:197-200), although he is sometimes listed among pre-fall Christologists. This is of course understandable, because as this thesis will show, the alternative Christology is pre-fall.

There is a fourth position, which emphasises that Jesus' human nature was like that of a born-again believer (Zurcher 1999:202). This position is not common among SDA theologians and lay members. It was mainly taught by Thomas A. Davis in his book *Was Jesus Really Like Us?* (Davis 1979).

To do justice to these views, I will briefly discuss each of them. Before I do this, however, I will give a brief historical background of the SDA Church. This will help to appreciate the Christological controversies that the denomination has experienced and continues to experience. Who are the SDAs? How did they get divided on the human nature of Jesus? As White holds a special place in the SDA Christology, and because in their controversies

some SDA theologians refer to her works in support of their positions, I will discuss her views separately.

### **6.3.1 Brief Historical Background**

Who are the SDAs? Vyhmeister (2000:1) responds: 'Seventh-day Adventists are a conservative Protestant body of *evangelical* Christians whose faith is grounded in the Bible and centred on Jesus, with stress on His atoning death on the cross, ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and soon return to redeem His people' (emphasis added).

The birth of the official church dates to the early 1860s, but its roots reach back to apostolic times, since the SDA pioneers saw themselves as continuing the New Testament tradition. SDAs see themselves as called by God to continue the Protestant Reformation, and specifically to preach the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12. The name 'Seventh-day Adventist' was adopted in 1860, while the church was officially organised in 1863.

In particular, it can be mentioned that the SDA Church began with the preaching of an American farmer by the name of William Miller (1782-1849) during the American spiritual revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to Hill (2006:344), Miller was a Baptist from New York who in 1835 published a book, *Evidences from Scripture and history of the second coming of Christ about the year 1843*. Miller's book was extremely popular and many Americans fervently believed his theory. He studied the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and concluded, based on the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, that Jesus would come in 1843. When Jesus did not appear in 1843, Miller redid his sums and found that Jesus would actually come on 22 October 1844. Unfortunately for him, Jesus did not come on that day as well, and those who were expecting Him on that day, were greatly disappointed. After this disappointment, the people split into groups differing in their opinions on why Jesus had not come (Vyhmeister 2000:3). Of interest to me is the group that maintained that the chronology was correct, but that they had expected the wrong event, for the founders of the SDA Church were in this group.

This group taught that, instead of coming to planet earth the second time on 22 October 1844, Jesus began the second phase of His priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The group also taught death sleep and seventh-day Sabbath observance. However, while Miller continued to expect the return of Jesus, he did not accept the new understanding of the heavenly sanctuary, death sleep, or seventh-day Sabbath observance along with the pioneers of the SDA Church (Vyhmeister 2000:4). He died in 1849 in the hope of a soon-coming Saviour.

Of those who came out of the Millerite movement and led in the founding of the SDA Church were Joseph Bates (1792-1872), James Springer White (1821-1881) and Ellen Gould (Harmon) White (1827-1915). For the purposes of this study, I will only review Ellen White's view of the human nature of Jesus. As I already noted, SDA scholars are divided on the Christology of White. It is for this reason that I have decided to review her Christology separately. I will first give biographical sketch of her, and then proceed to review her view of the human nature of Jesus.

### **6.3.2 Ellen Gould (Harmon) White (1827-1915)**

White was one of the founders of the SDA Church. Her works have greatly influenced the thinking of many SDA scholars. In fact, her role in SDA theology is indispensable. One of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church makes reference to the ministry of White (cf. General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:247).

#### **6.3.2.1 Biographical Sketch**

According to Vyhmeister (2000:6), the SDA Church recognises White as a messenger of the Lord, the recipient of a unique and fruitful gift of prophecy. She was born in a farm home north of Gorham, Maine. She and her twin, Elizabeth, were the youngest of eight children. During her childhood the family moved to Portland, Maine, where her father was a hatmaker.

Something happened when Ellen was nine years old, and that permanently shattered her dream of receiving formal education. When returning from school one afternoon, she was

hit in the face by a stone thrown by a classmate. She was unconscious for three weeks after sustaining a broken nose. Her broken nose and probable concussion made breathing difficult. She did not go back to school until she was 12 years old when she felt strong enough to resume school. However, she was not long able to endure the stress, and her formal schooling came to an end. Her parents taught her practical skills at home. Whatever later education she had, came, largely from reading several books – her personal library had over one thousand books.

Ellen was brought up in the Methodist Church, where her father was a deacon. The Harmon family took religion seriously. In 1840, she and other members of her family heard William Miller lecture on the second coming of Jesus and accepted the belief that Jesus would return to earth about the year 1843. She was baptised by immersion on 26 June 1842 and received into the Methodist Church.

Her prophetic ministry began in December 1844 when she met in worship with four other women at the home of a friend. While they were praying, 17-year-old Ellen received her first vision, in which she saw a representation of the journey of the Adventist people to heaven (White 2005:41-48). In her ministry, which spanned about 70 years, she received several other visions. These visions helped individuals as well as the whole body of SDA Christians. She wrote several books and contributed many periodical articles. She contributed some 4,600 articles to the journals of the SDA Church (*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* 1966:1414). She wrote on salvation, health, education, family life, and many other aspects of life. For the purposes of this study, it should be mentioned that, since she was not a systematic theologian, her Christological views are scattered throughout her works and can be found even in unlikely places. Her major theme was Jesus and the salvation He brought to fallen humankind. She is regarded as the most translated American woman in history.

In her early work, Ellen travelled with a young Adventist preacher, James White, to whom she got married on 30 August 1846. One of her children, William Clarence White, travelled

and worked with her after the death of her husband in 1881, until she also died on 16 July 1915.

### **6.3.2.2 Her Prophetic Gift**

SDAs believe that the gift of prophecy in the SDA Church was manifested in the ministry and writings of White. Her writings hold an authoritative place in the SDA theology, but do not take the place of the Bible. White herself calls her writings a lesser light, given to point people to the Bible, which is the greater light, and states: 'The testimonies of the Spirit of God are given to direct men to His Word, which has been neglected' (White 2006a:30, 46). This suggests that one does not have to read the writings of White in order to find Jesus. He is to be found in the Bible (cf. John 5:39). However, one cannot reject her writings and still claim to be a Seventh-day Adventist, for SDAs believe that she was God's messenger. In fact, one who rejects White's prophetic ministry is likely to be viewed by other SDAs as an apostate. This is because of the fact that if White was God's messenger, then rejecting her prophetic gift is tantamount to rejecting God who gave her the gift.

To show how SDAs view the role of White in the life of the church, I will reproduce the SDA fundamental belief number 18: *The Gift of Prophecy*, which reads as follows:

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9) (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2015:168).

It is important to emphasise the point that the SDAs do not place White's writings on equal footing with the Bible. They clearly state that her writings make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. This means that what she wrote about, should only be accepted if it is in accord with God's infallible word. In other words, her writings are not infallible. In fact, a survey of the SDA history reveals that in the formulation of doctrine, White's role was confirmatory. After a careful study of a particular point, the pioneers of the SDA Church would receive confirmation from God through communication to White that they had arrived at a correct understanding of Bible teaching on that particular point. Therefore, the SDA doctrine did not originate with White.

At this point, it is important to find out what White believed with respect to the human nature of Jesus. As to Jesus' divine nature, there is no controversy: SDAs are generally in agreement that she taught that He is God. For instance, she wrote in 1906: 'Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore' (White 2006a:247).

Jesus' humanity was one of White's major themes. As noted already, her views on the subject will be found scattered in most of her works. She writes: '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' (White 2006a:244).

When one surveys the Christological works of White, one notices that on the topic of Jesus' humanity, she makes statements that can be put into four categories: 1) Statements that simply say that Jesus assumed a human nature; 2) statements that say that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature; 3) statements that seemingly say that Jesus assumed a sinless human nature; and 4) statements that suggest that Jesus' human nature was unique. For this study it is important to explore samples of these statements.

#### *6.3.2.2.1 Jesus Assumed a Human Nature*

That God was incarnated in the Person of Jesus Christ is White's indispensable theme, which she puts in very clear language. She uses such phrases as Jesus Christ 'clothed



His divinity with humanity'; 'Christ took humanity'; 'Christ assumed humanity'; 'Christ's human nature was created'; and other similar phrases (White 2006a:246, 252; 2006b: 129). It is not necessary for me to list all her statements in this category, for there is no SDA theologian (or lay person), who has come out publicly to argue that White taught otherwise. Thus, for the purposes of this study, one such statement is sufficient. She writes in the context of Jesus' first temptation: 'The exalted Son of God in *assuming* humanity draws Himself nearer to man by standing as the sinner's substitute' (White 2006a:279; emphasis added).

As earlier noted, White does make some statements that suggest that the human nature that Jesus assumed, was that of fallen humanity. This is what I will now turn to.

#### 6.3.2.2 *Jesus Assumed a Fallen Human Nature*

There are many statements suggesting that White taught that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. The books I have surveyed indicate that she made such statements in 1874, 1892, 1896, 1898, 1900, 1901, and 1902 (she may have made statements in other years I have not been able to gather during my research). Three statements will suffice.

In 1896, White (2006b:134) wrote: 'Having taken our *fallen* nature, He [Jesus] showed what it might become, by accepting the ample provision He has made for it, and by becoming partaker of the divine nature' (emphasis added).

SDA Christological debates that focus on White's statements such as this one, have divided Christologists into two camps. One camp argues that the phrase 'our fallen nature' refers to our physical human nature, and not to our spiritual nature. SDA Christologists (Heppenstall, Dederen, Adams, and others) who hold the alternative Christology as noted above, fall into this camp (cf. Heppenstall 1977:126; Dederen 2000:164-165; Adams 1994:58-72)). They argue that Jesus assumed the spiritual nature like the one that Adam and Eve possessed before they fell into sin. They note, however, that His physical human nature was like that of the fallen Adam and Eve. In other words, Jesus took a 'fallen nature' in as far as His physical human nature was concerned. On the other hand, post-

fall Christologists (Wieland, Douglass, Zurcher, and others) take such statements to literally teach that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature both spiritually and physically (cf. Wieland 1989:27,103-120; Douglass 1977:27, 28; Zurcher 1999:285-303).

In her classic commentary on the life of Jesus, White (2006c:38-39) writes:

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam, He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were, is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.

The comments I have made with respect to the first statement in this category also apply to this statement. Whereas postlapsarian Christologists argue that White did not distinguish between Jesus' spiritual and physical natures, alternative Christologists see a distinction in her statement by relating it to other statements that seem to teach that Jesus assumed a sinless human nature. It is not my intention to review the debate in detail, for such an exercise is beyond the scope of this study. I must point out, however, that the four views (postlapsarian, prelapsarian, alternative, and born-again), which Adventist Christologists hold, are represented, are thought to be taught by White.

There is another statement White has made, which seems to clearly teach that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. She asserts: 'Christ did in reality unite the *offending* nature of man with his own *sinless* nature, because by this act of condescension he would be enabled to pour out his blessings on behalf of the fallen race' (White 1995:752; emphasis added).

I have not read any book on Christology by a SDA theologian that discusses this statement. My assumption is that SDA Christologists have not seen this statement which

White has written in 1900. If they have, it is possible that they have deliberately decided to ignore it.

There are other statements on the human nature of Jesus made by White that seemingly suggest that His human nature was in itself sinless. To complete the picture of her position on the human nature of Jesus, I need to turn to some of these statements, and later to the statements that suggest that Jesus' human nature was unique.

#### 6.3.2.2.3 *Jesus' Human Nature Was Sinless*

The statements discussed in this section have ignited a lot of debate among SDA scholars. Those who espouse the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature argue that He was sinless both in His performance and in His divine nature. Therefore, the statements by White that seemingly suggest that Jesus' human nature was inherently sinless should be taken to refer to either His performance or His divine nature. On the other hand, scholars who espouse the pre-fall view and those who advocate the alternative Christology assert that the statements by White that seemingly suggest that Jesus' human nature was inherently sinless, refer to His human nature.

White (2006a:256) writes: 'We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ'. This statement as it stands without considering the context in which it was made, clearly suggests that Jesus' human nature was sinless. It could therefore be interpreted to support the pre-fall view of Jesus' human nature.

White does suggest that Jesus was born without a taint of sin when she asserts: 'He was born without a taint of sin but came into the world in like manner as the human family' (White 1898, *Letter 97*; cf. Nichol 1980b:925). What does White mean when she states that Jesus was born without a taint of sin? Does she mean that He did not inherit sin as a tendency that all human beings inherit? Since the two representative SDA theologians have probably been influenced by White's Christology, these questions will be answered when evaluating their views.

#### 6.3.2.2.4 *Jesus' Human Nature Was Unique*

The following two statements are representative of all White's Christological statements that SDA Christologists suggest refer to Jesus' unique human nature: 'Christ, who knew not the least taint of sin or defilement, took our nature in its deteriorated condition', and, 'In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin' (White 2006a:253, 256). In the first statement, she states that Jesus knew no taint of sin or defilement. She also says that He who knew no taint of sin or defilement took our nature in its deteriorated condition. The second statement says that, while Jesus took upon Himself our nature in its fallen condition, He did not in the least participate in its sin. SDA scholars have interpreted these statements differently.

In summary it can be stated that White made statements, which clearly indicate that Jesus assumed a human nature. She asserted that Jesus took the fallen human nature. However, she also made statements that seemingly suggest that Jesus' human nature was inherently sinless. There are statements in her works that suggest that Jesus' human nature was unique. It must be observed that these statements have been interpreted differently by SDA scholars.

I will now review the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus as espoused by SDA theologians.

### **6.3.3 The Postlapsarian Model**

Prior to 1955/1956, it would appear that the popular model of Jesus' humanity among SDAs was the postlapsarian model. SDA thinkers taught that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. It was taught that He took the same nature that all fallen human beings possess, the differences being that, while fallen human beings have carnal minds and have yielded to temptation, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His birth and He did not commit sin.

From the pioneer group, I will briefly discuss the post-fall views of Waggoner and Jones. The Christological views of these SDA pioneers are crucial in this study, because I have

assumed that they influenced the thinking of Sequeira. From the contemporary thinkers, I will discuss the post-fall views Wieland and Zurcher just to show that the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature is still held by theologians other than Sequeira.

### **6.3.3.1 The Post-fall View of the Pioneers**

I will first give a brief biographical sketch of each of the two pioneers before discussing their views.

#### *6.3.3.1.1 Ellet J. Waggoner (1855-1916)*

As already noted, I will first briefly give a biographical sketch of Waggoner, after which I will review his model of Jesus' human nature.

##### *a) Biographical sketch*

Ellet Joseph Waggoner was the sixth of 10 children born to Joseph H. Waggoner (1820-1889) and his wife, Maryetta Hall Waggoner (1823-1908). He was born on 12 January 1855 in Waukau, Winnebago County, Wisconsin.

Waggoner graduated from the Long Island Medical College in 1878, which later became the State University of New York, College of Medicine at New York City (Whidden II 2008:41). In other words, Waggoner did not train as a minister of the gospel, but as a medical doctor. It seems that, after graduating from medical school, Waggoner practised medicine and also preached. It would appear that he became a full-time assistant editor to his father at the *Signs of the Times* in Oakland, California, during the spring of 1883. Later, Waggoner concentrated on preaching and writing.

SDAs remember Waggoner especially for the role he played with his friend, Alonzo Jones, at the Minneapolis General Conference session in 1888. It was at that conference that the two young men emphasised the message of righteousness by faith, which the SDA Church had neglected in its quest to repair the breach that popular Christianity had made in God's law.

*b) View of Jesus' human nature*

Waggoner believes that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. He argues that if Jesus took upon Himself the likeness of humans in order that He might redeem them, it must have been sinful humans that He was made like, for it is sinful humans that He came to redeem (Waggoner 1999:31). In Waggoner's view, the human flesh, which Jesus took upon His divine nature, had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which a fallen human nature is subject. He sees evidence for this in Paul's statement that the gospel concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3). David's line has men who had a fallen, sinful nature (cf. Matt 1:1-17). Thus, Waggoner does not see how Jesus who was born of the seed of David could escape the great law of heredity. In his line of thought, if Jesus' ancestors had a fallen, sinful nature, then Jesus assumed that nature as well. All children of fallen, sinful human beings inherit the common nature of their parents.

According to Waggoner (1999:31), David had all the passions of human nature. To give support to his assertion, he cites Psalm 51:5: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me'. In citing this verse, Waggoner suggests that Jesus inherited the same sinful nature that all fallen human beings inherit from their parents. He also cites Hebrews 2:16-18 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 in support of his post-fall view of Jesus' human nature.

Another line of thought in Waggoner's mind is that, if Jesus came to redeem fallen human beings, then His substitutive role demanded that He assumes a fallen, sinful human nature. Thus, Waggoner argues for the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature based on the doctrine of substitution.

Commenting on Romans 8:3, Waggoner (1895/1896:128) argues that Jesus did not simulate sinful flesh, but actually took sinful flesh. He suggests that Jesus took the same flesh that all have who are born of a woman.

However, Waggoner also views Jesus as being sinless. He asserts: 'Sinless, yet not only counted as a sinner, but actually taking upon Himself sinful nature' (Waggoner 1999:32-33). With respect to how Jesus overcame temptation, he states: 'His humanity only veiled His Divine nature, by which He was inseparably connected with the invisible God, and which was more than able successfully to resist the weaknesses of the flesh' (Waggoner 1999:33-34).

He suggests that there was a struggle in Jesus' whole life. This struggle was such that since Jesus' human nature was the very fallen, sinful nature that all fallen, sinful human beings possess, when tempted by Satan, His flesh would tend to sin. However, Jesus' divine nature did not at any time harbour an evil desire, and His divine power did not waver (Waggoner 1999:34). Thus, His divine power enabled Him to live His earthly life above the dictates of a fallen, sinful human flesh. It was in this light that Jesus was sinless. Despite unrelenting efforts by the enemy of righteousness to lead Him into sin, He held to His divine power.

Waggoner (1999:34) contends that Jesus' followers can have the same divine power to help them overcome temptation if they choose to. After quoting Ephesians 3:14-19, he asserts: 'Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, may dwell in our hearts, so that we may be filled with the fullness of God' (Waggoner 1999:35). Thus, through the divine power of God, dwelling in the hearts of the believers, they may overcome temptation.

In Waggoner's view, Jesus is touched with the suffering that believers experience, because He assumed the very sinful human nature they possess. He argues:

That is, having suffered all that sinful flesh is heir to, He knows all about it, and so closely does He identify Himself with His children that whatever presses upon them makes a like impression upon Him, and He knows how much Divine power is necessary to resist it; and if we but sincerely desire to deny 'ungodliness and worldly lusts', He is able and anxious to give us strength 'exceedingly

abundantly, above all that we ask or think'. All the power which Christ had dwelling in Him by nature, we may have dwelling in us by grace, for He freely bestows it upon us (Waggoner 1999:35).

For the purposes of this study, I will ask Waggoner this question: Did Jesus resist temptation by appealing to the power that dwelt in Him by nature, or did He appeal to the external power of the Father? Because this study is not about his Christology, I will not follow through these questions. For now, Jones' Christology will be discussed.

#### *6.3.3.1.2 Alonzo Trevier Jones (1850-1923)*

As I did for Waggoner, I will first give a brief biographical sketch of Jones, after which I will review his view of the human nature of Jesus.

##### *a) Biographical sketch*

Alonzo Jones' biographer and SDA Church historian, Knight (1987:15) reports that the former arose from his watery baptismal grave in Walla Walla, Washington Territory on 8 August 1874 with these words: 'Dead to the world, and alive to thee, O my God!' Sergeant Alonzo Jones had been 'earnestly seeking the Lord', and a few days earlier he had received 'bright evidence of sins forgiven' (Knight 1987:15).

According to Knight (1987:15), Jones was charismatic, forceful, handsome, and tending to extremes. He became a leading figure in the SDA Church during the 1890s, after the landmark 1888 Minneapolis General Conference session. However, in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jones would turn against the church he loved and develop into one of its most ardent foes. He was controversial throughout his career, remaining so to the very end of his life.

Alonzo Trevier Jones was born in Rockhill, Ohio, on 21 April 1850. On 2 November 1870 he enlisted in the United States Army as a private and received his discharge as a sergeant five years later on the same day (Knight 1987:16). Thus, the Christologist whose works I am now going to review was not a trained theologian, but a former soldier.



However, what did he believe was the nature of Jesus' humanity? The answer to this question is very crucial to this study because, as I have noted above, Jones influenced Sequeira's Christology. While it is true that Sequeira developed His Christology quite independently, he was very much influenced by the Christological views of Waggoner and Jones. Thus, reviewing Jones' Christology prepares a platform for a contextual evaluation of Sequeira's Christology.

*b) View of Jesus' human nature*

A survey of Jones' Christological works confirms that, in his view, Jesus assumed a sinful human nature. He notes that Jesus was made in the nature of humankind, as humankind is, since humankind sinned, and not as humankind was, before sin entered (Jones 2003:28). This is because, in his view, for Jesus to have come in the nature of humankind, as humankind was before sin entered, would have been only to come in a way and in a nature in which it would be impossible for Him to know the sufferings of humankind, and therefore it would be impossible for Him to reach humankind to save them. In Jones' opinion, for Jesus to know humankind's sufferings, and therefore to save humankind, He necessarily had to assume a fallen human nature. He argues:

For if He came in a human nature different from that which human nature in this world actually is, then, even though He were in the world, yet, for any practical purpose in reaching man (sic.) and helping him (sic.), He was as far from him (sic.) as if He had never come: for, in that case, in His human nature He was just as far from man (sic.) and just as much of another world as if He had never come into this world at all (Jones 2003:41).

Commenting on Galatians 4:4-5, Jones (2003:35) asserts: 'By His coming He brought redemption to every soul who is *under the law*. But in order perfectly to bring that redemption to men under the law, He Himself must come to men, just where they are, and as they are, *under the law*' (emphasis added). Jones (2003:33) also states: 'To be under the law is to be guilty, condemned, and subject to the curse'. The question that one would ask is: Does Jones suggest that Jesus was 'guilty, condemned, and subject to the

curse' since He came to where human beings are under the law? From his statements, one would conclude that Jones means just that. However, his other statements clarify what he means: The heritage of all human beings descended from Adam and Eve is that of being 'guilty, condemned, and subject to the curse'. It is debatable in Adventist theology whether we inherit guilt from our parents. That is why it is important to point out that the idea that we inherit guilt, is Jones' view. However, Adams (1994:71) shares Jones' view that we inherit guilt.

In order to avoid being misunderstood as to be suggesting that Jesus was of native right as all other human beings, Jones observes that Jesus *was made* what He had not always been: 'But bear in mind forever that all this "*He was made*". He was *none of this of Himself*, of native fault; but all of it He "*was made*" (Jones 2003:35; emphasis added). By being born of Mary, Jesus was made what He never had been before.

With respect to the law of heredity, Jones is of the view that it applied to Jesus in much the same way that it applies to all human beings born after sin entered. Thus, the law of heredity affected Him both physically and spiritually. He inherited a physically weak human nature from Mary. He also inherited the tendency to sin from Mary, which all human beings inherit from their parents. Jones (2003:47-48) suggests:

[A]ll the sin of this world, from its origin in the world to the end of it in the world, was laid upon Him: both sin as it is in itself, and sin as it is when committed by us: sin in its tendency, and sin in the act: sin as it is hereditary in us, uncommitted by us; and sin as it is committed by us.

According to Jones (2003:48), it was only by subjecting Himself to the law of heredity that Jesus could reach sin in full and true measure as sin truly is. If He had not inherited the tendency to sin that all human beings inherit from their parents, He would not be able to deal with the root of sin. If He had thus failed to deal with the root of sin, holy living would have been impossible.

It has been argued that our liability to sin was laid upon Jesus, in His being flesh, in His being born of a woman, of the same flesh and blood as we are, so that His righteousness, which is the righteousness of God (1 Cor 1:30), might actually be manifested in us as our daily life (Jones 2003:48). That by '*liability to sin*' Jones means the tendency to sin, is confirmed by this statement:

In delivering us from sin, it is not enough that we shall be saved from the sins that we have actually committed: we must be saved from committing other sins. And that this may be so, there must be met and subdued this *hereditary liability* to sin; we must become possessed of power to keep us from sinning – a power to conquer this liability, this hereditary tendency that is in us, to sin (Jones 2003:48).

Jones uses the phrase 'laid upon Christ' in reference to both the sins we actually commit and the tendency to sin, which we have inherited from our parents. Texts that, in his view, suggest that the law of heredity applied to Jesus and those that suggest that sins were laid on Him at the cross are used in the same way (Jones 2003:48).

There is the question of how Jesus' mind related to the mind of fallen human beings. In Jones' view, Jesus did not assume a sinful human mind (Adams 1994:35); but if Jesus had a different mind from the one that fallen human beings have, was He one hundred per cent like all fallen human beings? And if His mind was different from the one that fallen human beings have, why did God not give other human beings a mind like that of Jesus?

Scholars such as Adams have challenged Jones on this point. Objecting to Jones' view, he (Adams 1994:35) asks: 'Wouldn't all of us have appreciated being born with a special mind such as Christ had?' It is not my intention to discuss these questions, for such an exercise is beyond the scope of this study. However, these questions are important, because one of the Christologists I have selected for review and evaluation in this study has presumably been influenced by Jones' Christology.

The controversial subject of the human nature of Jesus has been discussed all the way from the time of the pioneers of the SDA Church such as Waggoner and Jones, to our contemporary times. As I noted earlier, I have selected Wieland and Zurcher to represent contemporary Christologists who advocate the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature.

### **6.3.3.2 The Post-fall Views of Contemporary Adventist Christologists**

Several contemporary SDA theologians have found the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature in the Bible. For the purposes of this study, however, the views of two theologians will suffice. I have selected Wieland, because he claims that his post-fall view of Jesus' human nature is the one held by the pioneers of the SDA Church, especially Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones (cf. Adams 1994:12-36). Apart from this, he was a missionary to Africa. Zurcher was a theologian who was not only a university professor, but also an administrator in the SDA Church.

#### *6.3.3.2.1 Robert Julius Wieland (1916-2011)*

I will first give a brief biographical sketch of Wieland, just as I did with the two pioneer SDA Christologists. I will then proceed to discuss what he believes was Jesus' human nature and why he believes so.

##### *a) Biographical sketch*

After Wieland died on 13 July 2011, his obituary was published in Gold County Media Newspapers on 4 August 2011. He attended the Southern Missionary College and later graduated from the SDA Seminary at the Emmanuel Missionary College near Washington, D.C. He then became pastor of a small church in St. Augustine, Florida. In 1945, he answered a call to become a SDA missionary to Africa and journeyed to Uganda just after World War II. In Uganda, he lived in a countryside where he built several churches before moving to Kampala. In 1952, he moved to Nairobi, Kenya, where he was a pastor, church administrator, radio speaker, editor, and prolific writer. After moving back to the United States in 1964, he became pastor of the Brawley, Banning and Chula Vista SDA churches in California. In 1979, he returned to Africa for two years of further service in his beloved Kenya. After retirement, he moved to Meadow Vista in 1986. In retirement, he continued

his dedicated service to his church, speaking widely at seminars and church meetings in Europe, India, Japan, Australia, West Africa, and around the United States. He authored dozens of books. For the purposes of this study, I will review his Christological view found in his *Powerful Good News* (Wieland 1989).

*b) View of Jesus' human nature*

Wieland is of the view that the message of righteousness by faith is directly dependent on Jesus having assumed a fallen human nature. In other words, the sinful human nature that Jesus assumed, is the foundation on which the message of righteousness by faith is built. In this light, Wieland (1989:27) argues: '[T]he concept of "Christ's righteousness" is meaningless apart from the unique New Testament truth of His taking our fallen, sinful nature, yet remaining sinless and living a sinless life'.

Thus, in Wieland's view, Jesus lived a righteous life in our fallen, sinful nature. Generally, pre-fall and alternative Christologists accuse post-fall Christologists of legalism. It is important to observe that Wieland would be an exception, if his whole theology would be proven to have no leaning towards legalism. I do not, however, intend to engage into that venture, for it is beyond the scope of this study. What is of interest to me is that Wieland links his post-fall view of the human nature of Jesus to the NT message of righteousness by faith.

According to Wieland, Jesus cannot truly be our substitute, unless He has truly taken our place as Immanuel, 'God with us' (Wieland 1989:27). In his view, the phrase 'truly taken our place', must be interpreted to mean that Jesus took our fallen, sinful nature and worked out righteousness in that nature, before He died as our substitute on Calvary's cross (Wieland 1989:27). It is his contention that the view that Jesus took only the unfallen, sinless nature of Adam before he fell into sin, is a legacy of medieval Christianity that failed to appreciate how fully God became human in Jesus (Wieland 1989:27). The kind of humanity that Jesus found was a fallen, sinful humanity. Therefore, if God became human, then He became part of the fallen, sinful humanity.

It is important to observe that Wieland also links Jesus' human nature to the doctrine of substitution. In other words, in order for Jesus to become fallen, sinful humanity's substitute, He needed to assume a fallen, sinful human nature. Of course, the doctrine of substitution is directly linked to the NT message of righteousness by faith.

For Wieland, the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature was proclaimed by the apostles as part of the message of God's grace. In his view, the apostles' message of grace proclaimed what is often neglected or denied within the SDA Church today – 'the truth of Jesus' human nature being like, not unlike, ours' (Wieland 1989:95). It is Wieland's contention that what impressed the apostles 'was the reality of the Son of God coming nigh at hand, taking their nature and being tempted as they were, suffering in their place, accepting their poverty that He might give them His wealth, conquering their temptations by faith but with the same equipment they had' (Wieland 1989:95-96).

For Wieland, Jesus could only be tempted as the apostles were, if He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. He suffered in our place in the very fallen, sinful human nature that we all have, and not in an unfallen, sinless human flesh (Wieland 1989:112-113). Thus, Wieland links his post-fall view of Jesus' human nature to temptation and suffering. Jesus could only be tempted and suffer as the apostles later did, if He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. Wieland therefore views Jesus as an example to born-again Christians.

Jesus came all the way to where fallen, sinful human beings are. He is thus the believer's motivation when it comes to living a victorious life. If He assumed Adam's pre-fall human nature, then born-again believers do not have a motivation for a holy life in their fallen, sinful nature. In this light, Wieland (1989:106) asserts: 'Youth in particular are overjoyed with the New Testament message that presents Jesus as taking upon Himself our fallen nature, facing our temptations, feeling their full strength, knowing how we feel, and yet gaining the complete victory in sinless character and sinless living'.

Commenting on Romans 8:3-4, Wieland (1989:110), states: 'The word "likeness" in the Greek means *identical, the same as*. It cannot mean unlike or different from'. In other

words, God sent His Son and condemned sin in the flesh identical with ours. The Greek term for 'flesh' is *sarx*, which in Wieland's view, always means the sinful, fallen flesh (or nature) which all human beings share alike. Commenting on 1 John 4:2 and 3, he argues that the Bible knows of no other kind of 'flesh', and John knows of no 'exemption' which separates Jesus from taking our fallen, sinful flesh (Wieland 1989:108).

Wieland (1989:112) describes the gospel package in which we find Jesus who assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, as a treasure-chest of truth. In his summary of the contents of this treasure-chest, and at point (g), he states:

Specifically, He did not take the nature of sinless beings, but that of the 'seed', the genetic descendants of Abraham. Thus, in the strongest language possible we are assured that Christ took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how 'to aid those who are tempted' (Heb. 2:18) (Wieland 1989:112-113).

To become a merciful and faithful High Priest, Jesus had to be 'made like' the people He would have to represent before God (Wieland 1989:113). Jesus is not only our High Priest, but also our divine-human physician and psychiatrist, and His perfect sinlessness, which He obtained by perfectly obeying His Father, qualifies Him (Wieland 1989:113). Wieland links his post-fall view of Jesus' human nature to His High Priestly ministry. Jesus obtained sinlessness in the fallen, sinful human flesh by obeying His Father. It is this sinlessness that qualifies Him to be the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary.

Mary gave to Jesus the same fallen, sinful human nature that she possessed. Paul argued that Jesus 'was born of the seed [genetic inheritance] of David according to the flesh' (Rom 1:3). In the fallen, sinful human nature, Jesus 'was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15). In this light, Wieland asserts: 'He took our nature, yet He did not sin, so that He might save us from the sin which is in our nature' (Wieland 1989:113). Wieland links his post-fall view to sin as nature – the tendency to wrongdoing, which He needed to deal with. In other words, in order to deal with the tendency to sin, Jesus had to assume the fallen, sinful human nature.

In Jesus' life, Wieland (1989:113) refers to Jesus who denied His 'own will' in order to follow His 'Father's will' (John 5:30; 6:38; Matt 26:39; Rom 15:3), suggesting that 'His life on earth was a constant struggle against the identical temptations to indulge self that we feel'. But there is a difference between Jesus and us. Wieland sees this difference in the fact that we have yielded to the self and therefore are sinners by performance, while Jesus constantly denied the self and therefore was sinless. Jesus was never selfish, not even for a moment. Thus, for Wieland, one has to yield to the self and therefore sin in order to be called a sinner. It should be noted, however, that he does admit that sin is in our very nature.

There is something interesting about Wieland's Christology. He suggests that Paul's frequent reference to the 'righteousness' of Jesus argues in favour of the post-fall model of His human nature (Wieland 1989:115-116). He contends that this significant phrase implicitly requires the understanding that in His incarnation, Jesus took the fallen, sinful nature of humanity. He argues that this is because of the fact that the term 'righteousness' is never applied in Scripture to beings with a sinless nature. Unfallen angels are called 'holy' angels and never 'righteous' angels. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were innocent and holy, but Scripture never says that they were *righteous*. It was possible for Adam and Eve to develop a righteous character by obedience to God. In this light it is asserted that it was possible for Adam and Eve to develop a righteous character if they had resisted temptation, but the only righteousness we now know is that of Jesus Christ, and if ever we will also become righteous, it will be in a fallen, sinful flesh. Righteousness has become a term that refers to a holiness that has confronted temptation in a sinful human nature and has perfectly overcome it (Wieland 1989:116). Our only righteousness is that which God wrought in Jesus Christ in the fallen, sinful human nature He assumed.

Jesus as the true God-Man confronted temptation in a sinful human nature and perfectly overcame it. In this way He developed a righteous character. Thus, if Adam and Eve had obeyed God, they would have developed a righteous character, but not a righteous character in the sense in which Jesus developed His. Jesus developed a righteous character in a human nature that was fallen and sinful, for that is what He assumed.



The term 'righteousness' has to do with justification, and something that is sinless in nature does not need justification (Wieland 1989:116). It is Wieland's contention that the innate meaning of the term is 'straightening something that is crooked, correcting something that is unjust'. Wieland argues that one who has a sinless nature would be holy but could not be said to be righteous. In his view, Jesus was sinless in His divine nature, but 'took' our sinful, crooked nature and lived a perfect life of holiness in it. This is what entitled Jesus to be 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS' (Jer 23:6).

Concerning Wieland's view of Jesus' human nature, it is clear that, in his opinion, Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, but He still was without sin. He asserts: 'His "likeness of sinful flesh" gave Him perfect entrance to condemn that very sin that enslaves you and me – judge it, pronounce sentence on it, kill it' (Wieland 1989:114).

In Wieland's view, Jesus condemned sin in the fallen, sinful flesh that He assumed. The fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus assumed, together with His perfect performance, qualified Him to be our substitute. He suffered for us in the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed. He is the believer's example in holy living because it was in a fallen, sinful flesh that He lived a holy life. He qualified to be the High Priest by assuming a fallen, sinful human nature and developing a sinless character in that same nature.

As I have noted above, Wieland is viewed by some SDA scholars as an extremist in His Christological views, which he links to the message of righteousness by faith. He belongs to what is called the '1888-Message Study Committee', which believed that it had the role of restoring the message that was taught by the pioneers of the SDA Church in 1888 (cf. Adams 1994:12-36), which (unfortunately) the Church has lost to a great extent, because of its shift from the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature to the pre-fall (or alternative) Christology. Whether or not Wieland is an extremist and tends to be legalistic in his theology, as some SDA scholars suggest, is not for me to judge. What is crucial to me is that what is said about Wieland is usually generalised to suggest that the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature is responsible for legalism in the SDA Church. This seems to be what runs through Adams' book, *The Nature of Christ: Help for a church divided over*

*perfection* (1994). The post-fall view that Kwabena Donkor evaluates in his *The Nature of Christ: The Soteriological Question* (2005) is also treated in the same light. I state this because any Christological position that this study proposes at the end, may either be accepted or rejected by SDA theologians such as Adams and Donkor, based on our history as a Church.

Another contemporary SDA Christologist who espouses the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature is Zurcher. I now turn to his Christological view.

#### 6.3.3.2.2 *Jean Rudolf Zurcher (1918-2003)*

As I did with Wieland, I will first give a brief biographical sketch of Zurcher based on his obituary written by Herbert E. Douglass. After the biography, I will review his view of Jesus' human nature.

##### *a) Biographical sketch*

Jean Rudolf Zurcher was born on 30 September 1918 in Switzerland. He died on 28 January 2003, at the age of 84.

Zurcher received a PhD from the University of Geneva. As a teacher and administrator, his career spanned three continents. His nearly 40 years of church work included serving as president of the SDA Church's French Seminary at Campus Adventiste du Saleve in Collonges-sous-Saleve, France; teacher and principal in Tananarive, Madagascar; secretary of the Adventist Church's Euro-Africa Division headquarters in Berne, Switzerland; member of the Ellen G. White Estate board, a research institution; and member of the Biblical Research Institute Committee of the General Conference of the SDA Church.

Zurcher received many awards and distinctions from the University of Geneva, the Dutch, French, and Malagasy governments, and the General Conference department of education, in recognition of his contributions as an international authority in education, theology, and philosophy. The Adventist University in Madagascar bears his name. Zurcher published numerous books and articles in French and English on the nature of

Jesus, biblical anthropology, and prophecy. His writings have been translated into more than ten languages. I will, for the purposes of this study, review his Christological views in his *Touched with Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* (Zurcher 1999).

*b) View of Jesus' human nature*

Zurcher did an excellent historical survey of Adventist thought on the human nature of Jesus, which he published in book form in 1999. His personal view is given in chapter 16 under the heading: *Biblical Data of Christology* (Zurcher 1999:285-303). He begins the chapter this way: 'The position that Christ took fallen human nature has had only a few supporters throughout the history of Christianity, and those who taught it have often been considered heretics' (Zurcher 1999:285).

Interestingly, even with this observation, Zurcher boldly takes the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature. It would appear that he wrote the statement above because of the observation I have already made when reviewing his Christology – that some SDA theologians accuse post-fall Christologists of being legalistic in their approach to salvation. It is also possible that Zurcher wrote that statement because in the 1955/1956 conversations with Evangelicals, the SDA Church realised that it was not viewed as an Evangelical denomination, partly because of its post-fall view of Jesus' human nature.

According to Zurcher (1999:285), to solve a problem, one must start with a careful analysis of the data. This is because of the fact that a problem well understood is half solved. In his view, the clearly defined scriptural data on which Christology rests, can be summarised as a paradox: Jesus participated 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' without participating in any of the sins of humanity (Zurcher 1999:285). This twofold affirmation, in Zurcher's opinion, is set forth in the heart of the prologue of John's Gospel: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). This is how the paradox of Jesus' humanity is expressed: 'The paradox arises from the fact that while having become

human in a state of fallenness, Christ nevertheless lived among us without sin, in perfect obedience to the law of God' (Zurcher 1999:286).

In Zurcher's opinion, John made the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature the touchstone of Christology: 'By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world' (1 John 4:2, 3). For Zurcher (1999:286), the flesh in which 'Christ has come' is a fallen, sinful flesh, for this is the only flesh that was in existence at the incarnation.

According to Zurcher (1999:286), the term 'flesh' in John generally has a pejorative connotation. It is stated in the Bible that human beings are born according to 'the will of the flesh' (John 1:13, KJV), and they 'judge after the flesh' (John 8:15, KJV). John concluded: 'For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world' (1 John 2:16, KJV). In His discourses, Jesus Himself systematically opposed 'the flesh' to 'the Spirit', stating: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). He also said: 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing' (John 6:63).

Paul likewise emphasised in his Epistles the opposition between the flesh and the Spirit in the Person of Jesus (Zurcher 1999:286). This can be seen in the introduction to his Epistle to the Romans, where he defines the twofold nature of Jesus as follows: '[M]ade of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness' (Rom 1:3, 4, KJV). Paul restated the basics of Christology in these terms: 'God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit' (1 Tim 3:16, KJV).

In Romans 8:3, Paul asserted: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh'. Commenting on this text, Zurcher (1999:286) argues:

'Whatever the meaning given to the word "likeness", it cannot signify that Christ's flesh might be different from that of humanity at His birth'.

It can therefore be concluded that Jesus was not like Adam before the fall, for God had not created Adam 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. This shows that Zurcher is very clear about Jesus' human nature – it was not pre-fall. Even if Jesus were to assume a nature other than the post-fall nature, it would certainly not be pre-fall.

Zurcher (1999:286-287) observes that Paul emphasised in Philippians 2:6-8, the paradox between the reality of the human condition and the perfection of Jesus' obedience to the very end of His life. The text stresses on the one hand, Jesus' full and entire participation in human nature, while on the other hand, it emphasises His obedience. Although He was 'born of a woman, born under the law' (Gal 4:5) like all human beings, by His perfect obedience to the law of God, He not only 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3, KJV), but He became the Redeemer of 'those under the law' (Gal 4:5). Paul asserted that 'the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death' (Rom 8:2).

According to Zurcher (1999:287), the Epistle to the Hebrews emphasises this same twofold aspect of the Person and work of Jesus. This is especially clear in Hebrews 2:14-18. Jesus had to partake of the same flesh and blood like His brothers, and tempted in every way just as His brothers and sisters were tempted (Heb 2:14; 4:15). It is Zurcher's contention that this was the condition necessary to fulfil His mission of serving as 'a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people' (Heb 2:17).

One of the problems of Christology involves misconceptions about the nature of sin (Zurcher 1999:287). Therefore, to solve the problem of Jesus' human nature, it is important that Christologists first determine the biblical concept of sin. It must be noted that the Bible establishes an important distinction between sin in the singular, as the power of temptation (Rom 7:23), and sins in the plural, as acts of transgression of the law

(1 John 3:4) (Zurcher 1999:288). According to Zurcher, sin in the singular is inherited from parents, while sin in the plural is not transferrable from one person to another. It is sin in the plural that brings about guilt, since only a person who commits sin is guilty. Guilt is not transmissible by heredity (Zurcher 1999:291). This is made clear in texts such as Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; and Ezekiel 18:4 and 20. It has thus been asserted: 'What the posterity of Adam and Eve has inherited is the tendency to sin and the consequence of sin: death' (Zurcher 1999:292).

With this understanding of the nature of sin, according to Zurcher (1999:292), it was possible for Jesus to live without sin, free from all corruption, in thought and in performance, in a fallen, sinful human nature. It must be understood, however, that in Zurcher's opinion, Jesus did not 'resemble' a carnal human being, defiled by a life of sin, and a slave to evil propensities. It is Zurcher's perception that Jesus' flesh only *resembled* the flesh in which 'the law of sin' dwelt, and where 'the lust of the flesh, and lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' (1 John 2:16, KJV) held sway (Zurcher 1999:292). This is because, whereas carnal minds are devoid of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was always under the influence of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in Him. It is only on this point that Zurcher sees a difference between Jesus' humanity and our humanity from an ontological perspective. Otherwise he sees Jesus' human nature as being ontologically the same fallen, sinful human nature that we possess. He, however, does not venture into arguments as to how it was that God filled Jesus with the Holy Spirit right from the inception of His earthly life, while He did not do the same for other human beings (except John the Baptist) (cf. Luke 1:15).

Jesus inherited evil tendencies from Mary, but He did not cultivate those tendencies by yielding to temptation (Zurcher 1999:292-293) and as long as He did not cultivate the evil tendencies that He inherited from Mary, He was not a sinner. He assumed a human nature with the tendency to sin in order to deal with that tendency to sin. This, according to Zurcher, is what Paul suggested in Romans 8:3.

The reasons for the incarnation determined what kind of human nature Jesus was to assume. Zurcher (1999:296-298) has identified four reasons: The first reason was for

Jesus 'to be a sin offering'. Zurcher suggests the second reason as to condemn 'sin in the flesh'. The third reason was to free human beings 'from the law of sin and death', while the fourth reason was '[t]hat the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us'. The last three reasons are all based on Romans 8:2-4. Sin as a tendency residing in our flesh, was dealt with through Jesus being sent 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom 8:3). After living a life of perfect obedience to the law of God, in the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed, He went to Calvary's cross, where the tendency to sin in His flesh was condemned. The sins we commit were laid on Jesus as our substitute. This is Zurcher's teaching with respect to sin and the human nature that Jesus assumed.

To summarise, Zurcher clearly teaches that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. Jesus' human nature did not, however, resemble that of a carnal human being, defiled by a life of sin and a slave of evil propensities. Jesus was not defiled by a life of sin and therefore, He was not a slave of evil propensities. He had the law of sin (tendency to sin) in His flesh, but He did not let this tendency to sin turn into actual sin by yielding to temptation. He was tempted as all fallen human beings are tempted, but He did not commit sin. Sin as nature residing in the flesh was condemned in His human flesh, which was actually our flesh. Sin as what we do was laid on Him as our substitute.

I conclude this part, stating that from the time of the pioneers of the SDA Church to our contemporary time, there have been some Christologists who have taught that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. In their view, Jesus had the tendency to sin residing in His flesh, which made His life a perpetual struggle with temptation. Temptation came to Him in the same way that it comes to all fallen, sinful human beings. Of course, because of the purity of His life, Jesus' temptations were severer than the temptations that fallen, sinful human beings experience. This is because it is the one who has not yielded to temptation, who really feels the full weight of that temptation. Jesus was different from the rest of the fallen, sinful human beings, because He did not resemble carnal human beings. He was also different from the rest of the fallen, sinful human beings, because while the rest of us have sinned, He did not commit any sin.

Knight (1987:133) observes that, before the 1950s, the post-fall model of the human nature of Jesus did not create controversy, because it was taken to be a theological nonissue. This, however, changed in the 1950s when some Adventist leaders had conversations with Evangelical scholars. Some theologians started teaching the prelapsarian view, which I will now review.

#### **6.3.4 The Prelapsarian Model**

On the outset, I must state that while Fortin (sa.:1) suggests that the prelapsarian model of Jesus' human nature is espoused in the SDA Church by theologians such as Roy Allan Anderson and W.E. Read, I have found it extremely difficult to find a theologian who really teaches what may strictly be termed the unfallen nature position of Jesus' humanity. On endnote 1, Rand (1985:8) asserts:

Those focusing on Christ's sinless nature include (alphabetically):  
N.R. Gulley, *Christ Our Substitute* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982); E. Heppenstall, *The Man Who Is God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1977); H.K. LaRondelle, *Christ Our Salvation* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1980).

However, Fortin (sa.:2) puts Heppenstall under the list of those who espouse what has been termed the 'alternative' or 'unique' Christology. While he differentiates the unfallen nature position from the alternative or unique Christology, Fortin calls this Christology prelapsarian. In other words, in Fortin's view, both the unfallen nature position and the alternative or unique Christology belong to the prelapsarian model categorisation of the human nature of Jesus.

Zurcher (1999:222-224) puts Gulley under those who espouse the unfallen nature position. Gulley (2012:434-435), however, puts himself under those who teach the alternative or unique Christology. Perhaps, Fortin (sa.:1) is right when he states that only a few Christologists still hold the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature as most prelapsarian proponents now belong to the third group, which is the alternative or unique Christo-



logy. Adams (1994:27) observes: 'Unless I have it all wrong, I don't run into many Adventists defending a prelapsarian position'.

For the purposes of this study, I have decided to review the prelapsarian model of the human nature of Jesus based on an article written by Benjamin Rand, whom the article identifies as a pseudonym. But even as I review this article, I must admit that I have put it under the prelapsarian category, because the article itself claims that it teaches the unfallen human nature position. It will be seen in the evaluation chapter, however, that the so-called prelapsarian model is actually what has been termed the alternative or unique Christology. It is for this reason that one of the aims undergirding this study is to reconcile Erickson's prelapsarian model with Gulley's unique or alternative Christology.

In reviewing the prelapsarian model, I will not follow the format I followed when reviewing the postlapsarian model, for the obvious reason that I have not been able to find contemporary representative Christologists who espouse the unfallen human nature of Jesus position in the strictest sense of the categorisation. I will instead review the model following a thematic approach. I will be guided by the following subheadings: Definition/Description; the nature of sin and Jesus' human nature; Jesus as a unique man from Abrahamic and Davidic line; and tempted like us. These headings are in the article itself.

#### **6.3.4.1 Definition/Description**

What do theologians mean when they say that Jesus took the unfallen nature of humanity at the incarnation? In other words, what does the prelapsarian position say about the human nature of Jesus? This model of Jesus' human nature in its strictest sense is the model where the incarnate Jesus is viewed to have entered human history with the nature of an unfallen Adam. Gulley (2012:433) notes that 'the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam'.

Thus, the prelapsarian model of the human nature of Jesus excludes propensities and drives from Jesus' human nature. Jesus is viewed as having taken the spiritual nature of

an unfallen humankind. However, His physical nature is taken to have been like that of the fallen humankind. In his article, Rand (1985:1) observes that there is 'overwhelming Biblical evidence that Jesus did in fact take a sinless human nature at birth (spiritually) while possessing a similar physical nature to others of His day'. But how do the proponents of the prelapsarian model of Jesus' human nature view the nature of sin? How does this relate to the human nature that Jesus had to assume?

#### **6.3.4.2 The Nature of Sin and Jesus' Human Nature**

According to Rand (1985:2), we find gives two definitions of sin in the Bible: One in terms of behaviour, and the other in terms of relationship. Before one can commit sin, there is already a broken relationship between God and that person. The broken relationship between the sinner and God is passed on from the parent to the child (Rand 1985:3). In this light, it is argued that the biblical fact that *sin* is passed on from Adam to each of his descendants (not Adam's guilt, but death, the result of his sin) means that sin cannot be defined merely as an 'act'. In Rand's view, guilt is not passed on from Adam to his posterity. What is passed on is 'death, the result of [Adam's] sin'. It is Rand's contention that though sin includes wrong choices, and therefore acts, and even thoughts (cf. Matt 5:28), it also includes nature – the tendency or leaning toward sin. The root of sin as thoughts or acts is the tendency or leaning toward sin, which all human beings are born with.

What does this definition of sin suggest? It suggests that Jesus did not assume the fallen spiritual nature of Adam, since He came into the world to restore the relationship between God and humankind and not continue in the separation (Rand 1985:2). If Jesus had assumed a fallen spiritual nature, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of a saviour. It can thus be said that 'He came *similar* to us (as a human, physically speaking) but not the same as us (in broken relationship with God, spiritually speaking' (Rand 1985:2-3; emphasis added). Rand suggests that 'if Jesus came with a sinful nature but resisted, then perhaps someone else will do the same, and that person would not need Jesus to save him'.

It has been observed that Christologists need to always remember that every human being is born a sinner (Rand 1985:3). This is supported by biblical texts like Psalm 51:5: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me'; Psalm 58:3: 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies'; and Isaiah 48:8: 'Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, *and were called a transgressor from the womb*' (emphasis added). Christologists should, on the other hand, note that 'Jesus was not only filled with the Holy Spirit from birth but, unlike everyone else, was born of the Holy Spirit. Unlike others He was also God' (Rand 1985:3-4). In other words, Jesus was a unique man. Thus, while arguing that Jesus assumed the pre-fall nature of Adam, Rand recognises the fact that He was not exactly like pre-fall Adam. There was some uniqueness to His human nature.

#### **6.3.4.3 Jesus as a Unique Human Being**

Rand (1985:4) contends that Jesus was unlike other humans in the centre of His consciousness, which determined all else. He was the only human person who lived before His birth and made a decision to be born to please the Father. Thus, His consciousness was always alert to His mission, for He came to do His Father's will, as the author to the Hebrews suggested (Heb 10:9). Jesus glorified His Father throughout His life and finished the work He gave Him to do (John 17:4); no other person has lived in such utter selflessness for God and humanity.

Rand sees Jesus' uniqueness in the application of the term *μονογενής* to Him. This term is used five times of Jesus in the NT (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). This term can be translated with 'only one of its kind'. In this light, Rand argues:

When used of Jesus, [*μονογενής*] always has this one of a kind, unique, connotation. He was the Son of promise – unique in mission and birth as well as in His life. His unique birth consisted not only in how He was born (without human father) but in what nature He was born (without human sin) (Rand 1985:4).

It can thus be said that Jesus was one of a kind in the sense that He was the only man who was also God, and He was the only man who was conceived in His mother's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, without a human father. Furthermore, Jesus was the only man who existed eternally as God before becoming a man, and thus was uniquely independent of parents for life. 'He was the only man who was similar but not the same as other humans' (Rand 1985:4). He was both similar and different from the rest of human beings. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ in as far as His nature is concerned lies in this simple fact, which is also a mystery.

According to Rand (1985:4), the Bible requires that Jesus' uniqueness be our starting point in Christology. It is his contention that Christological thought must always begin with Jesus' uniqueness as Son of God, rather than with His similarity to humans as Son of man. He asserts: 'Further, epistemologically, we cannot move from the human to the divine, but we can from the divine to the human' and, 'In determining the human nature of the man Jesus, [μονογενής] must be the starting point and centre of Christology' (Rand 1985:5; emphasis added). It should be emphasised that, by this argument, Rand tries to strengthen his pre-fall Christology.

There is another sense in which Jesus is unique: the Bible uses the term πρωτότοκος of Him. Rand (1985:5) states that the Greek term πρωτότοκος (firstborn), is used seven times in the NT in reference to Jesus. This is particularly the case in the following texts: Hebrews 1:6; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18; and Revelation 1:5. The term 'firstborn' refers not so much to time as to importance: Applied to Jesus, it implies that He was unique, suggesting His unique mission. Jesus' mission was to become the new Adam, the new firstborn or head of the race. This qualified Him to be our representative, High Priest, and intercessor in the great controversy between God and the devil. As the new Adam, He was born with a spiritual nature that was like that of the pre-fallen Adam.

Rand (1985:5) advises that Christologists will have to always bear in mind that Jesus is our example in life, but not in birth, for if He is our example in birth, maybe some other human could achieve a perfect life and not need a saviour. However, the Bible suggests

that our first birth has no salvific value. As a matter of fact, all those who receive the first birth need to be born again (John 3:3, 5). On the other hand, Jesus did not need the new birth and that puts Him in a class of His own.

Then there is the question of how texts like Hebrews 2:16 and Romans 1:3 should be interpreted? Do they suggest that Jesus had a sinful nature in the line of Abraham and David?

#### **6.3.4.4 Jesus from Abrahamic, Davidic Line**

Commenting on Hebrews 2:16 and Romans 1:3, Rand (1985:5) argues: 'In the light of the broad biblical context, these texts are not considering the *nature* but the *mission* of Christ' (original emphasis). These two texts are not concerned with the fact that Jesus was born in flesh (sinless or sinful), they rather maintain that, as a Jew (Heb 2:16) and as their king (Rom 1:3), Jesus came as the fulfilment of the covenant. Just as God called Abraham to form a people through whom He could bless all nations (Gen 22:18), Jesus came through Mary to save the nations (Matt 1:18, 21; cf. John 3:16).

Matthew, writing to the Jews, begins Jesus' genealogy with Abraham (Matt 1:1). The author of the letter to the Hebrews, also writing to the Jews, also connected Jesus to Abraham (Heb 2:16). This, according to Rand (1985:5), is because Israel, in the OT period, and the Christian Jews in the NT days, looked back to Abraham as the 'father' of God's church in its first form (cf. Is 51:2; Rom 4:12; James 2:21 in their contexts). That Jesus is placed in the line of the Abrahamic covenant, however, does not negate His actualising the very purpose of that covenantal line by becoming the second Adam. In fact, the same book (Rom 1:3) that mentions Jesus' connection with David, also presents Him as the second Adam (Rom 5:12-21).

The point to note is that in Rand's view, Hebrews 2:16 and Romans 1:3 do not suggest that Jesus assumed a sinful human nature. They simply tell us about the mission for which He assumed a human nature. Rand (1985:6) asserts: 'Down in the pit He took hold of real human flesh only to the extent that His union with the Father remained unaffected',

which means that He could not be sinful in nature, for by definition such a nature is the result of separation from God. Rand elaborates:

Union with God and sinful spiritual nature are as far removed from each other as are heaven and hell. To say that He became identified with us but remained loyal to God is to misunderstand the terrible nature of sin. Sin means separation from God. Either Jesus maintained an unbroken relationship with the Father or He let go and plunged into our estrangement (Rand 1985:6).

Anticipating an objection to the sinless human nature position based on its implied indication that sinners cannot keep the law, Rand (1985:6) argues that the fact that Jesus was born sinless in no way suggests that law-keeping is not important to the rest of us who are born sinners. In his view, it is not true that a belief in Jesus' sinless nature means no one else can or should even try to keep the law, for Jesus did not become our substitute so that we can live as we please.

A question can be asked to Rand: How was Jesus tempted just as the rest of the human beings are tempted if He assumed a sinless human nature?

#### **6.3.4.5 Tempted Like Us**

According to Rand (1985:6), our Christology affects our understanding of Jesus' temptations. The author of the letter to the Hebrews has put it this way: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15). It is Rand's perception that the phrase 'in all points' does not mean the same temptations (plural), but the same temptation (singular). The thrust of all temptation is to stop depending on God. Therefore, Jesus was tempted to cease His dependence upon God in order to break His relationship with His Father. The devil tempted Him to stop depending on the Father and to depend on His inherent divine power instead.

It is Rand's contention that Jesus' temptations were greater than ours, for only the One who never gave in could feel their full force (Rand 1985:6). He is on this point in harmony with Bruce ([1972] 1974:87). Rand is also in harmony with Westcott, who expresses it this way: 'Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He, who falls, yields before the last strain' (Westcott 1950:59).

According to James 1:14, 'each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed'. The question is: Was this the way Jesus was tempted? Rand (1985:6) observes: 'Evil propensities (a leaning to sin) are acquired in two ways: through sinning and through being born a sinner'. In his view, Jesus did neither, for He was born 'that Holy One' (Luke 1:35) and the devil could not find any evil in Him (John 14:30). This suggests that Jesus was not tempted the way James has put it, for He did not have evil propensities. It can thus be argued that Hebrews 4:15 simply suggests that Jesus, as a unique human, was tempted in all points like us. He was not tempted to do the same things we do, for certain things that come to us as temptations were not there during Jesus' time. For instance, Jesus was not tempted to steal a car, for there were no cars during His time.

In case some objectors would argue that if Jesus remained unlike us, then He had an advantage over us, Rand (1985:7) argues that Jesus remaining unlike us did not give Him an advantage; it was actually disadvantageous to Him, for if the thrust of temptation is to get one to rely upon himself rather than on God, then Jesus had a bigger temptation, because He had His own divinity to rely on, whereas we have nothing comparable. In Rand's view, Jesus' disadvantage in temptation issued out of His uniqueness.

According to Rand (1985:7), if Jesus' taking our sinful nature was prerequisite to His being tempted like us, then He should have come contemporary with the last person born. He observes that, even if Jesus were a last-generation human person, His contemporaries would still be more degraded because of their own sinning. It is Rand's contention that if a sinful nature is a necessity for being tempted like us, then Jesus was not tempted like

our generation and those degraded through personal sin. On the other hand, if Jesus' uniqueness made His temptation bigger, then He did not need our fallen nature to be tempted like us.

Rand (1985:7) argues that Jesus only became sin for us at His death (2 Cor 5:21). Sin did not bring separation between Jesus and His Father until Jesus cried: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matt 27:46). Jesus therefore became sin for us as part of His mission at His death and not in nature at birth.

There does not seem to be any SDA scholar who denies the biblical fact that Jesus vicariously became sin on Calvary's cross. Nevertheless, there are scholars such as Sequeira (cf. chapter 7), who argue that sin as a tendency or leaning, cannot be assumed vicariously because it is part of the human nature. It needed to be assumed by Jesus in order for it to be dealt with in actuality on Calvary's cross.

In summary it can be stated that Rand (1985:8) is of the opinion that Jesus was a sinless divinity united with a sin-weakened human flesh, but He was equally sinless in both natures. He defines Jesus' human nature as at most sin-affected physically but absolutely sinless spiritually. Jesus was the ultimate human being of His time. Although He became tired and hungry and felt pain, spiritually He maintained an unbroken communion with God as had the pre-fall Adam. Jesus was μονογενής and πρωτότοκος in His mission. He was eternally God, who also became eternally human, with two natures in one Person. When He decided to become human, He purposed to do the will of God. He was not only born of the Holy Spirit, but also filled with the Holy Spirit from His birth. As a unique Person, He was tempted like the rest of the human race, but without committing sin. His uniqueness made His temptation bigger than ours. His uniqueness was therefore a disadvantage to Him. He did not have evil propensities, implying that He did not have a natural leaning to sin. He only became sin (2 Cor 5:21) at His death, and not at His birth. He only felt/was separated from the Father at His death (Matt 27:46), and not at His birth. This is the prelapsarian model of Jesus' human nature as taught by Rand and obviously all others who hold this view.



Related to the prelapsarian or pre-fall view is what has been called in SDA theology the 'alternative' or 'unique' Christology. As noted earlier, this position is held by Heppenstall, Dederen, Webster, Adams, Whidden II, Pfandl, and others, although Rand (1985:8) suggests that Heppenstall espoused the prelapsarian or unfallen human nature position. This indicates how difficult it is to differentiate between the prelapsarian or pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature from the alternative or unique Christology. For the purposes of this study, I will review the alternative or unique Christology as presented in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Dederen 2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005). This is because these two books represent the views of a representative number of Adventist theologians, although the model of Jesus' human nature taught therein is not an official SDA position. I will also refer to the individual works of Adams and Webster in support of this model.

### **6.3.5 The Alternative or Unique Christology**

In reviewing the alternative or unique Christology, I will follow the same thematic approach that I followed when reviewing the prelapsarian or pre-fall model. This model will be reviewed under the following headings: Definition/Description; Jesus' uniqueness; extent of Jesus' identification with human nature; Jesus' experience with temptations; and the sinlessness of Jesus' human nature.

#### **6.3.5.1 Definition/Description**

According to Gulley (2012:433), the alternative or unique Christology posits that Jesus is neither like the pre-fall Adam nor like the post-fall human race. In other words, Jesus occupies a position between the two. Gulley postulates that Jesus received some of the post-fall nature (innocent infirmities), but not the full post-fall nature (sinful propensities). Jesus therefore assumed a unique human nature. He did not assume our fallen nature with everything that defines a fallen nature. He only assumed some aspects of our fallen human nature.

The alternative or unique Christology is well summarised by Dederen (2000:164-165):

His [Jesus'] humanity did not correspond to Adam's humanity before the Fall, nor in every respect to Adam's humanity after the Fall, for the Scriptures portray Christ's humanity as sinless...He took human nature in its fallen condition with its infirmities and liabilities and bearing the consequences of sin; but not its sinfulness ...Jesus took human nature, weakened and deteriorated by four thousand years of sin, yet undefiled and spotless.

According to the alternative or unique Christology, Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, but He was sinless, both in nature and in performance. However, the argument that the alternative or unique Christology is postlapsarian, is an argument that needs to be analysed and critically evaluated in this study. What seems to be clear about this Christology is its recognition of Jesus' uniqueness.

#### **6.3.5.2 Jesus' Uniqueness**

It is clear that the proponents of the alternative or unique Christology recognise the uniqueness of Jesus' human nature. It is argued that, '[t]hough He was born of a woman as is every other child, there was a great difference, a uniqueness' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:52). The uniqueness of Jesus is based on the fact that Mary was a virgin and Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20-23; Luke 1:31-37). Jesus could therefore claim true humanity through His mother and not through a biological father, because He did not have one. The virginal conception testifies to the fact that Jesus was unique. He was not a human in the sense that all of us are; He was the incarnate Word of God. But to what extent did Jesus identify with human nature? How human was Jesus?

#### **6.3.5.3 The Extent of Jesus' Identification with Human Nature**

Paul argued that 'what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3). A correct view of the expression 'likeness of sinful flesh' is

crucial in this context (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church 2005: 53).

According to the authors of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, the phrase ‘likeness of sinful flesh’ does not indicate that Jesus Christ was sinful or participated in sinful acts or thoughts (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:54). It is argued that, though Jesus was made in the form or likeness of sinful flesh, He was sinless, and His sinlessness is beyond questioning. To correctly interpret the phrase ‘likeness of sinful flesh’, one should appreciate what God intended to convey through the uplifted serpent in the desert, for it provides an understanding of Jesus’ human nature: ‘As the brass image in the likeness of the poisonous serpents was lifted up for the people’s healing, so the Son of God, made “in the likeness of sinful flesh”, was to be the Saviour of the world’ (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:53-54).

Before His incarnation, Jesus was ‘in the form of God’, implying that the divine nature was His from the beginning (John 1:1; Phil 2:6, 7). In the incarnation, He took the ‘form of a bondservant’, laying aside His divine prerogatives and becoming His Father’s servant (Is 42:1) in order to carry out the Father’s will (John 6:38; Matt 26:39, 42). When He became human, He did not cease to be God – He remained God, but did not use His divine prerogatives to advantage Himself.

The Bible calls Jesus Christ the second Adam or the ‘last man’ whereas Adam is called the ‘first man’ (1 Cor 15:45, 47). Adam had an advantage over Jesus in that he lived in paradise and had a perfect humanity, possessing full vigour of body and mind (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church 2005:54).

On the other hand, according to the *General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists* (2005:54), when Jesus took on His human nature, the race had already deteriorated through 4,000 years of sin on a sin-cursed planet. In order to save those in the utter depths of degradation, He took a human nature that, compared with Adam’s unfallen nature, had decreased in physical and mental strength – though He did so without sinning.

The proponents of the alternative or unique Christology suggest that sin affected Jesus' physical and mental strength, however, sin did not affect Jesus' spiritual nature. In other words, when we discuss Jesus' human nature, we must not drag His spiritual side to the level of a fallen, sinful human nature. He only assumed our fallen nature in as far as the physical side of humanity was concerned.

It is contended that, when Jesus took the human nature that bore the consequences of sin, He became subject to the infirmities and weaknesses that all humans do experience (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:54). The Son of Man was 'beset by weakness' or 'compassed with infirmity' (Heb 5:2, KJV; Matt 8:17; Is 53:4). He sensed His weakness and He had to offer 'prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death' (Heb 5:7), thereby identifying Himself with the needs and weaknesses so common to humanity.

What was Jesus' experience with temptations? How was He tempted in relation to how the rest of human beings are tempted?

#### **6.3.5.4 Jesus' Experience with Temptations**

The authors of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* argue that 'Christ took human nature with all its liabilities, including the possibility of yielding to temptation' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:55). The basic issue underlying all temptations is the question of whether to surrender to the will of God or not. With this argument, the authors of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* argue that Jesus 'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15). In other words, like the rest of us are tempted, Jesus was tempted to not surrender to God's will. However, in His encounter with temptations, Jesus always maintained His allegiance to God. Through continual dependence on divine power, Jesus successfully resisted the fiercest temptations, even though He was human. His victory over temptation qualified Him to sympathise with human weaknesses. Thus, believers in Jesus can overcome temptation by maintaining their dependence upon Jesus. The authors of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, therefore, are of the view that

Jesus is the believer's example in temptation, where a dependence on divine power is required.

Proponents of the alternative or unique Christology teach that Jesus suffered while being subjected to temptation (Heb 2:18) and He was made 'perfect through sufferings' (Heb 2:10). Because He Himself faced the power of temptation, believers in Him can rest assured that He understands how to help anyone who is tempted. Jesus 'was one with humanity in suffering the temptations to which human nature is subjected' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:55).

The proponents of the alternative or unique Christology claim that Jesus suffered more in proportion than believers in Him have, or will ever suffer, as they assert that 'Christ not only suffered more in proportion to His holiness, He faced stronger temptations than we humans have to' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:55). They are on this point in harmony with Westcott (1950:59) who argues: 'Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain'. The implication is that since Jesus did not yield to temptation, His suffering was more than our suffering, because we have yielded.

The authors of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (alternative Christologists) also had a forerunner of their theory in Bruce ([1972] 1974:85-86), who concluded likewise: 'Yet He endured triumphantly every form of testing that man could endure, without any weakening of His faith in God or any relaxation of His obedience to Him. Such endurance involves more, not less than ordinary human suffering'.

It is contended by the authors of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* that Jesus also faced a powerful temptation never known to humankind: The temptation to use His divine power on His own behalf (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:56). Jesus found it difficult to keep the level of humanity as it is for men and women to rise above the low level of their depraved natures and be partakers of the divine nature.

Did Jesus inherit the tendency to sin that other human beings inherit, or was He sinless in nature, or in performance? It would appear that, in the view of the proponents of the alternative or unique Christology, Jesus was sinless in both nature and performance.

#### **6.3.5.5 The Sinlessness of Jesus' Human Nature**

According to the proponents of the alternative or unique Christology, Jesus' birth was supernatural – He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20), and before He was born, He was described as 'that Holy One' (Luke 1:35). They assert: 'He took the nature of man in its fallen state, bearing the consequences of sin, not its sinfulness. He was one with the human race, except in sin' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:56).

Adams (1994:27), who espouses the alternative or unique Christology argues: 'We believe – and have always believed – that Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings!' One who reads this statement out of context would conclude that Adams espouses the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature. But this is not all that Adams says about Jesus' human nature. He does believe that 'the form and nature of fallen human beings' that Jesus took upon Himself was not the spiritual, but the physical form and nature. Jesus' spiritual nature was sinless, in other words, 'Jesus took upon Himself our nature with all its liabilities, but He was free from hereditary corruption or depravity and actual sin' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:56). This is important to note because it differentiates the alternative or unique Christology from the post-fall model. This Christology exempts Jesus from the tendency to sin, that all human beings have. Thus, whatever could be said about the nature of fallen human beings, could be said of Him, except for sin in nature and in performance.

In the alternative or unique Christology, the fallen nature that Jesus assumed is limited to his physical being. In this light, Adams (1994:59) asserts: 'He experienced physical deficiencies that characterize ordinary human beings. For example, He knew hunger (Matt. 4:2; 21:18), thirst (John 4:7; 19:28), fatigue (Matt. 8:24), and weariness (John 4:6)'. According to Adams (1994:58), this is as 'all Andrews University seminarians for the past

25 years or so have received it from the lips of long-time theology professor Dr. Raoul Dederen'. This is a teaching that has been transmitted from Heppenstall, to Dederen, to Adams, and to all the others who believe and teach it today. It has been popularised through the Andrews University and the two SDA publications, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Dederen (2000:164) puts it this way: 'In one's assessment of the human nature of Jesus, it is necessary to take account of another clear testimony of the NT concerning His sinless character, addressed clearly in a number of statements'.

It is interesting that, while Dederen talks about the NT testimony concerning Jesus' sinless character, the subheading under which he discusses this is 'A Sinless Human Nature' (Dederen 2000:164). Does he imply that a 'sinless character' is synonymous with a 'sinless nature'? The NT texts that Dederen refers to, are Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5; John 8:29 and 46; 14:30; and John 15:10, referring to Jesus' performance. In other words, Jesus was sinless in His performance. However, Dederen does not clarify to his readers what he implies by applying these NT texts to both a 'sinless human nature' and a 'sinless character'. He seemingly does not differentiate a 'sinless human nature' from a 'sinless character'. We read in John 6:69: '[A]nd we have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God' (ESV). This may be a reference to Jesus' divinity, for in the NKJV the text states: 'Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living of God'. The NKJV is in harmony with Matthew 16:16: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God', which was Peter's response to Jesus' question: 'But who do you say that I am?' (Matt 16:15). Is it by coincidence that, in both cases, it is Peter who responds to Jesus? It seems likely that in both instances, Peter was telling Jesus that they have come to know Him as God. However, Dederen seems to suggest that John 6:69 refers to the sinlessness of Jesus' human nature, as indicated by the subheading under which he discusses the text. This is clear from his statement: '[T]he Scriptures portray Jesus' humanity as sinless' (Dederen 2000:164). He asserts: 'Conceived by the Holy Spirit, His birth was supernatural (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35), so much so that the angel sent by the Father told Mary that "the child to be born will be called holy"

(Luke 1:35)' (Dederen 2000:164). Again, the subheading under which Dederen discusses these two texts suggests that he is referring to the sinlessness of Jesus' human nature.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul declared: 'For He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. Did Jesus not know sin as a divine Person? Did He not know sin in His human nature? Did He not know sin in performance? Whatever the right interpretation of the text may be, the subheading under which Dederen discusses this text suggests that he applies it to the inherent sinlessness of Jesus' human nature.

In my view, Webster (1984:451) puts the alternative or unique Christology in clearer terms when he submits:

Jesus Christ came into the world in the humanity of Adam after the fall and not before the fall, He assumed humanity affected by the laws of heredity and subject to weakness, infirmity and temptation ...Jesus Christ, while coming in fallen human nature was not infected by original sin and was born without any tendencies and propensities to sin, thus, we need have no misgivings concerning His absolute sinlessness.

What can be said about the alternative or unique Christology, then, is that, in that model, 'tendencies and propensities to sin' that all human beings are born with, are excluded from Jesus' human nature. This implies that this Christology upholds the post-fall model only in as far as Jesus' physical nature was concerned.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the alternative or unique Christology posits that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, but without the tendency to sin, which other human beings are born with. In other words, Jesus' spiritual nature was inherently sinless, while His physical nature was the same weak nature that we all have inherited from our parents. Jesus was tempted just as we are tempted, but without sin. However, Satan did not tempt Jesus by appealing to His inner propensities and drives, for He had none. Jesus suffered



temptation more than any of us has ever suffered because of the sinlessness of His human nature and because He did not yield to temptation, while we have yielded. Furthermore, Jesus suffered in a way that no human being has or will ever suffer: He had to resist the temptation to let go of humanity and appeal to His inherent divine power independently of His Father.

When evaluating Gulley's Christology, I will examine in detail the claim made by Adams (1994:27): 'We believe – and have always believed – that Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings!' in light of the former's assertion: 'The meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' (Gulley 2012:433; original emphasis). How can he say that he believes that 'Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings', when he argues that Jesus' human nature was unique? How can his model be postlapsarian when it does in fact omit inherent 'propensities and drives' from Jesus' human nature? The questions need to be answered in this study.

The last model that I will review under SDA Christology is called the new-birth or born-again Christology.

### **6.3.6 The New-birth or Born-again Christology**

Thomas Atwood Davis, who popularised the new-birth or born-again Christology in the SDA Church, was at first a strict post-fall Christologist. He seems to have changed his view later. It is important to note that the new-birth Christology is currently not popular among SDA theologians.

In this review, I will first consider Davis' early post-fall Christological views, after which I will define/describe the new-birth or born-again Christology. Thereafter, I will discuss Davis' claim that Jesus' human nature was like that of born-again people. I will conclude the review after looking at Davis' claim that Jesus' human nature was unlike that of born-again people. But first of all, it is important to give a short biographical sketch of him.

### 6.3.6.1 Biographical Sketch

This biographical sketch is based on the *Adventist Review* Online news article (2016), written by news editor, Andrew McChesney. The news article reports Davis' death on 20 July 2016.

Thomas Atwood Davis was born on 9 February 1920 in Safe Harbour, Newfoundland. His parents joined the SDA Church when he was 11 and enrolled him in an Adventist school, a decision that he later said, has set the course for his life.

During World War II, Davis was drafted into the Royal Canadian Air Force while studying at the Oshawa Missionary College (now Kingsway College) in Oshawa, Ontario. He was stationed in England where he spent two of his three years of service as a medic.

After he was discharged from the Royal Canadian Airforce, he studied theology at the Canadian Union College (now Burman University) and graduated in 1951. After graduation he worked as a singing evangelist and then as a pastor. He left the pastoral ministry in 1958 when he moved to Washington to become the editorial assistant for the *Bible Dictionary*, which was being prepared by the Review and Herald Publishing Association as part of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* series.

In 1960, Davis left the USA to serve as a missionary editor-in-chief of the Philippine Publishing House. He later (in 1965) moved to Oriental Watchman Publishing House in India in the same capacity.

Interestingly, it was when Davis went back to the USA from the mission field, that he found Jesus. This was while he was working as associate editor of the *Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*), a position he held for three years. He remained at the Review and Herald Publishing Association from 1970 until his retirement in 1985. He also worked as a book editor and edited the health magazine *Life and Health* (now *Vibrant Life*).

Some of Davis' books include *Preludes to Prayer* (1966), *Romans for the Every-Day Man* (1971), *How to Be a Victorious Christian* ([1975] 1977), and *Was Jesus Really Like Us?* (1979). His new-birth or born-again Christology is set forth in *Was Jesus Really Like Us?*

#### **6.3.6.2 Davis' Post-fall View**

As I noted above, Davis was at first a strict post-fall Christologist. He asserts that the mighty Creator, who had placed the atom of a world spinning in space, Himself became a partaker of the flesh and blood of a sinful human and made His home upon the tiny planet He had created. Davis argues: 'Had He taken upon Himself the form of sinless Adam he would have made an infinite sacrifice. But He went far beyond that when He was made in the fashion of man degraded through thousands of years of sin' (Davis 1966:346).

These convictions were repeated in Davis' 1971 book, *Romans for the Every-day Man*. Thus from 1966 to 1971, Davis clearly taught the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature, which he must have learnt from earlier SDA Christologists. That the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature was expressed clearly by the SDA Church in 1966 and 1971, way after their conversations with Evangelical scholars, suggests that, by Davis' time, there were still SDAs who held to the postlapsarian view of the pioneers. It is interesting that Davis pastored at the same time that SDAs and Evangelicals held talks, which prompted the SDA Church through its representatives to revise its position on Jesus' human nature.

It is difficult to tell what motivated Davis to write *Was Jesus Really Like Us?* in which he set forth his new-birth or born-again Christology. It would appear, however, that he wanted to explain to his readers that Jesus was unique, despite having assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. What is important to note is that in 1979, Davis moved from being a strict post-fall Christologist to a new-birth or born-again Christologist. It is possible that Heppenstall's book, *The Man Who is God* (Heppenstall 1977), in which the author presented a unique Jesus from a prelapsarian perspective, might have ignited Davis' desire to present a unique Jesus from a postlapsarian viewpoint. But how does Davis define/describe the new-birth or born-again Christology?

### **6.3.6.3 Definition/Description of the New-birth or Born-again Christology**

The new-birth or born-again Christology posits that, during the incarnation, Jesus assumed the nature of a fallen, sinful human being who has experienced the new birth.

### **6.3.6.4 Jesus' Human Nature like that of Born-Again People**

Davis studied Hebrews 2:11-17 on which he formulated his born-again Christology. He suggested that this passage is a reference, not to people who have not experienced the new birth, but those who have been born of the Holy Spirit. In his view, 'the seed of Abraham' (Heb 2:16) refers to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and are not living in sin. These are Jesus' brethren. His conclusion is based on Hebrews 2:17:

Jesus was not incarnated with a nature common to all men. He did not come to this world to be in all aspects like all men. The human nature He was endowed with was not like that of unregenerated sinners. His human nature was common only with those who have experienced a spiritual rebirth. Then when we read that Jesus was in all respects like His brethren, we understand that He had a nature like born-again people (Davis 1979:30-31).

It would appear that this position had been held by other prominent Adventist theologians of the past. One such Adventist theologian who, according to Davis, held this position was W.W. Prescott. Prescott had written in one of his editorials: 'Jesus was born again by the Holy Spirit...When one commits himself to God and submits to be born of the Spirit, he enters upon a new stage of experience, just as Jesus' (Davis 1979:32).

This concept had also been mentioned by Kenneth Wood in his editorial of the *Review and Herald* of 29 December 1977 (Zurcher 1999:2002). Thus, the new-birth Christology was also an alternative to the prelapsarian and postlapsarian views. It is an addition to the efforts that SDA theologians have made to present Jesus' human nature as being unique, at least from the postlapsarian perspective.

Someone may ask: Did Jesus have to go through a new birth? This takes me to Davis' understanding of Jesus' uniqueness.

#### **6.3.6.5 Jesus' Human Nature unlike that of Born-Again People**

While arguing that Jesus' human nature was like that of born-again people, Davis (1979:35) asserts that this must be said in a qualified sense. To be born-again, fallen human beings have to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, after being exposed to the everlasting gospel. After hearing the word of God as it is in Jesus, fallen human beings have to believe it, obey it, repent of and confess their sins. They are then said to be born of the Holy Spirit. People who receive the new-birth experience are actually those who are not only sinners by nature but have actually sinned by personal choice. This is not what Jesus went through. In this light, it is clarified: 'Jesus was ever filled with the Holy Spirit, pure, sinless, [and] untainted in the minutest degree by sin. So, He never needed that transforming experience. Thus, when we use the term with reference to Him, we do so in an accommodated sense for want of a better term' (Davis 1979:35).

According to Davis (1979:37), Jesus' human nature is different from that of a regenerated person, because a born-again person is still a flawed person from whom Jesus is removing the defects, while Jesus is the ideal Man, the Absolute in perfection of character in every respect. In other words, Jesus, in Davis' view, did not need to have defects removed from His character, for He did not have any of such defects.

It can thus be argued that, in one sense, Jesus' human nature, according to Davis, was identical with that of the rest of human beings, for He took upon Himself our fallen nature. In another sense, Jesus' human nature was not identical with that of the rest of human beings, for He assumed a human nature like that of a born-again person. Nevertheless, even when Davis states that Jesus had a human nature like that of born-again people, he does admit that he uses that terminology in an accommodated sense, for Jesus did not have to be born-again in the sense in which the rest of human beings are said to be born-again. In this way, he acknowledges the difficulty that his model presents.

While the SDA Church does not have an official position on the specific human nature that Jesus assumed, it has an official position on the divinity and humanity of Jesus. The SDA Church does clearly teach that the second Person of the Godhead became truly human. I will, for the purposes of this study, reproduce the SDA position on the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

### **6.3.7 The Official SDA Position**

Before I reproduce the official SDA position on the divinity and humanity of Jesus, it is necessary to first explain what I mean by 'official position'. The SDA Church claims that it has no creed but the Bible. The church, however, holds 'certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures' (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2015:162). These fundamental beliefs represent what the whole church believes is the teaching of Scripture. Changes to these fundamental beliefs are made at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truths or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word. All SDAs – clergy and laity – subscribe to these fundamental beliefs, and deviation from them is viewed as apostasy. However, the four models, postlapsarian, prelapsarian, alternative or unique Christology, and new-birth or born-again Christology, which I have already reviewed, represent the thoughts of individual SDA clergy and laity.

The challenge that an individual SDA researcher may face is that leading theologians and church administrators have gone ahead to explain in their own language these fundamental beliefs and published two books, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. The model of the human nature of Jesus Christ promoted in these two books is what has been termed the 'alternative' or 'unique' Christology. This suggests that if in this study I will come up with a model that contradicts the alternative or unique Christology, I will actually be contradicting the popular view of the authors of the mentioned two books. However, whatever model this study will arrive at, will be accepted as long as it will not contradict the SDA official position, since the SDA Church has allowed a plurality of views on the specific nature of Jesus' humanity.

Even though the SDA Church has allowed a plurality of views in as far as Jesus' human nature is concerned, it is actually the view of the Andrews University professors that eventually has the support of many of our theologians and lay people, because some of these people have not read the SDA history of Christology. Thus, those who may teach the post-fall view, like Zurcher suggests, are likely to be viewed as heretics. Therefore, this study is likely to make a contribution that may turn out to mediate among the competing views.

Having given these preliminary remarks, the following is the SDA's official position on the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ:

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2) (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2015:163).

As I already noted above, SDAs are generally in agreement on this fundamental belief. It is when they begin to delve into the specifics of the human nature of Jesus that they begin to differ. Thus, while I aim to unite SDA theologians through this study, it is possible that the outcome of the study may spark more debate and controversy. It is likely, however,

that the study will prove that the popular SDA view (alternative or unique Christology) and the Evangelical model represented by Erickson, are basically the same. Should this prove the case, then there will most likely be only two models to choose from: the postlapsarian model and the prelapsarian or alternative (unique) Christology.

In conclusion I must reiterate that the SDA Church does not have an official position regarding the specific human nature that Jesus assumed. The church has allowed a plurality of views. As a result, individual SDAs are free to hold any of the two major models, namely, the postlapsarian or the prelapsarian model. But some leading SDA theologians and church leaders have gone ahead to promote what has been termed the 'alternative' or 'unique' Christology in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and *Handbook of Seventh-day Theology*. This contradicts what has always been held, at least since 1976, that SDAs are free to hold either of the two models mentioned above.

With respect to *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, it has been observed:

Although this volume is not an officially voted statement (only the summary statements have been officially voted by the General Conference in session), it may be viewed as representative of 'the truth as it is in Jesus' (Ephesians 4:21) that Seventh-day Adventists around the globe cherish and proclaim (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005:vi).

While this statement may hold true with respect to everything else the book contains, it is not true with respect to the specific human nature that Jesus assumed. The detailed explanations on the specific human nature of Jesus create a problem for those who hold contrary views. This same observation may be made about *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* whose editor is actually a supporter of the alternative or unique Christology. In fact, the editor himself wrote the article dealing with the nature of Jesus. The observation I have thus made about the two books suggests that the model promoted in it needs to be critically evaluated. However, since the study focuses on the models espoused by three selected theologians, I will indirectly put the two books to scrutiny as I



evaluate Gulley's Christology, which, in my view, is the same as the one promoted in the two books. The new-birth or born-again Christology is not popular among SDA theologians. Therefore, it has been included in this review simply to indicate that, apart from the three views that are represented by the three selected theologians, there exists another view that has appealed to some people, at least in the SDA Church.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reviewed the Evangelical and SDA Christologies. The Evangelical Christology has been represented by Henry C. Thiessen and Wayne Grudem. Both Thiessen and Grudem teach that Jesus assumed the spiritual nature of the pre-fall Adam and the physical nature of the post-fall Adam. They both teach that Jesus is unique in the sense that He is a union of divinity and humanity and thus, unlike the rest of human beings. Apart from that, Jesus is unique because while here on earth He lived a sinless life. Jesus was born with a sinless spiritual nature because the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin in nature from Mary to Him. In heaven, Jesus bears the same physical body that He had here on earth, but which has been glorified.

The SDA Christology is difficult to categorise because there is no consensus among theologians, to the extent that the church has permitted its adherents to hold any of the prevailing views. The views currently prevailing in the SDA Church are both the post-fall and the pre-fall views, as well as alternative Christology and born-again Christology. Despite having allowed a plurality of views, the SDA Church has authorised the publication of two books that propagate the alternative Christology. By doing so, the Church has created a situation in which its members who are not familiar with the SDA history of Christology, are made to believe that the position in the two books represents the consensus of its faithful adherents. The truth, however, is that the SDA Christological position is the summarised one, which was voted for by the entire Church, and which has been reproduced above.

This chapter has set the stage for a contextual evaluation of the views of Jack Sequeira, Millard J. Erickson and Norman R. Gulley, whose works will be reviewed in the three chapters that follow. These works will be evaluated in chapter 11 (Jack Sequeira), chapter 12 (Millard J. Erickson), chapter 13 (Norman R. Gulley), and chapter 14 (all of them).

## CHAPTER 7

### THE POSTLAPSARIAN VIEW AS TAUGHT BY JACK SEQUEIRA

#### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reviewed Evangelical and SDA Christologies. In this chapter, I will review Sequeira's works on the humanity of Jesus Christ in which he makes it very clear that the second Person of the Godhead took the post-fall nature of Adam. The review follows the Christological themes relevant to this study. In reviewing Sequeira's works, I also consider the works of other scholars who hold a similar view of the humanity of Jesus Christ. I begin this review by giving a biographical sketch of Sequeira.

#### 7.2 Biographical Sketch

Jack Sequeira was born in Nairobi, Kenya, of Indian parents. He served as a missionary in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia for 18 years, and pastored in the USA for 22 years. He earned his BA Theology at the Newbold College in England, and his MA in Systematic Theology, and MDiv at the Andrews University in the USA.

Sequeira's major works for the purposes of this study are *Beyond Belief: The promise, the power, and the reality of the everlasting gospel* (Sequeira [1993] 1999), *Saviour of the World: The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel* (Sequeira 1996), *Romans: The Clearest Gospel of All* (Sequeira 2005), and *Built Upon the Rock: The 28 Fundamental Adventist Beliefs in Light of the Gospel* (Sequeira 2009). In these works, Sequeira suggests that Jesus' humanity was that of Adam after the fall (the postlapsarian or post-fall view).

In the epilogue to his *Saviour of the World: The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel*, Sequeira (1996:217) writes:

Today, many are going into Christless graves because we as a people have failed to manifest the matchless charms of our Lord and Saviour in word and action. I have written this book, not to add to the controversy that is now raging in regard to what kind of

human nature Christ assumed at the incarnation, nor to present arguments to win a debate. I have written to men and women who sincerely desire to know the truth as it is in Christ so that their Christian experience may be one of peace, joy, hope, and victory, thus glorifying their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Further, I have written this book for those who are seeking answers, facts, and explanations, concerning the most important subject that should occupy the mind of every Seventh-day Adventist.

It should be noted on the outset that, while Sequeira argues his view in all his works in a scholarly manner, he does it in such a way that the general readership can understand without struggling with technical theological jargon. His focus is the salvation of every human being, for in his view this is the purpose for which Jesus Christ came to earth. Sin disrupted God's plan for humanity, and therefore Jesus came to deal with the sin problem. It must be emphasised that for Sequeira, the major reason why God became human, was to deal with the dual problem of sin and save humanity. It is because of this that he treats the nature of Jesus Christ's humanity in the context of sin and salvation. In other words, in his view, the nature of sin determined what kind of humanity Jesus was to assume. Thus, in what follows I will look at Sequeira's view of the nature of sin. In doing so, I also consider the works of other scholars who are in harmony with his position.

### **7.3 The Nature of Sin**

The view of the nature of sin that a person holds, affects that person's position on the humanity of Jesus Christ. This is true of Sequeira as much as it is of other scholars, including the ones whose works I will review in the next two chapters.

In his book, *Beyond Belief*, Sequeira ([1993] 1999:11) asserts that the solution God provided to deal with the sin problem, is the everlasting gospel and this suggests that it is important to always begin the study of the gospel by first understanding sin. He observes that people generally try to understand the solution that God prepared for us in

Jesus, without first recognising the full extent of the problem, which God wanted to solve in coming up with the plan of salvation. In his view, it is only when we fully understand that we are one hundred percent sinful in both nature and action, that we truly understand God's solution that He provided for all human beings in Jesus Christ. Thus, an individual should first understand the depraved nature of sin, before it is possible to turn to Jesus for righteousness – He is our righteousness. Therefore, the gospel becomes meaningful, only against the background of a full understanding of sin, for the gospel or good news of salvation through the holy history of Jesus Christ is God's solution to the sin problem. This view is supported by Knight (2008:29) when he asserts that it is necessary and important to understand that an inadequate doctrine of salvation directly results from an inadequate doctrine of sin. In light of this, Vick (1983:86) argues that the first element in Christian perfection, and certainly in all other aspects of salvation, is to appreciate the biblical teaching that we are one hundred percent sinners. If we were not sinners, God would not have provided the plan of salvation. The degree of our sinfulness determined what kind of solution God needed to put in place. It is important therefore, to look at the origin of sin in order to appreciate its development and formulate an adequate definition which, in Sequeira's view, is very important in our quest for a model of Jesus' human nature that is biblically supported. Any attempt to formulate a model of Jesus' human nature without a correct understanding of the sin problem will not do justice to God's word.

### **7.3.1 The Origin of Sin**

Sequeira ([1993] 1999:11) asserts that sin originated in the mind of one of the angels that God has created, and who was the leader of the angels. His name was Lucifer (Ezek 28:14, 15). In his view, the Bible does not explain why sin could arise in a perfect being, because sin is inexplicable. It is for this reason that it is referred to as the 'mystery of lawlessness' (2 Thess 2:7). If we attempted to explain why Lucifer sinned against God, we would only end up condoning sin. The Bible only gives us a picture of *how* sin originated, and not *why* it originated.

When we study the OT, especially Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:11-19, we discover that the essence of Lucifer's sin was self-exaltation (cf. Sequeira [1993] 1999:11). Thus,

it can be argued that self-centredness – which is actually the love of oneself – is the underlying principle of all sin. This principle of self-centredness is in complete opposition to the principle of selfless, self-sacrificing love, which is the foundation of God's character and government. It can therefore be stated that sin is basically a rebellion against God and His self-sacrificing love, which God demonstrated in sending His unique Son to save sinners (John 3:16).

Although sin originated in heaven in the mind of Lucifer, God did not allow it to develop there (Sequeira [1993] 1999:12). Because of his rebellion against God, Lucifer lost his place in heaven. He and his angels were expelled out of heaven (cf. Rev 12:7-9) and Sequeira opines that it was here on earth that the fallen angel and his fellow rebels developed the principle of sin (Sequeira [1993] 1999:12). Thus, it is important for the purposes of this study to look at how sin developed here on earth, for it is only in doing so that we will appreciate our own sinfulness as human beings. This will necessarily help us to understand God's solution, which He provided in Jesus Christ.

### **7.3.2 The Development of Sin**

In the beginning, when the Triune God created this planet for humankind, of which Adam and Eve were the first two inhabitants, He gave them dominion over it, and all was perfect. Sin did not exist in our first parents and anything else that God has created (Gen 1:26, 28, 31) (Sequeira [1993] 1999:12). Sin, therefore, came from an external source. Lucifer, turned Satan, tempted Adam and Eve to sin and caused them to fall from the perfect state in which God created them (Gen 3:1-24; Luke 4:5, 6). Thus, Satan took possession of this world and made it his own on the basis of the principle, 'by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage' (2 Pet 2:19).

When the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to prepare for His public ministry, Satan wanted to take advantage of the fact that He was hungry and weary after his 40 days of fast. One of his temptations was based on the fact that the authority and splendour of the world 'has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish' (Luke 4:6). It is interesting to note that Jesus Christ, who, by creation, owns this planet (John 1:1-3, 14),

did not dispute Satan's claim, because the sin of our first parents made them lose their dominion over this planet (Sequeira [1993] 1999:12). Thus, since the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan has been the 'ruler [prince] of this world' (John 14:30). In fact, Paul called him the 'god of this age' (2 Cor 4:4).

As descendants of Adam and Eve, and before we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, we are in slavery to sin and to Satan (John 8:34; Rom 6:17; 2 Pet 2:19), the implication being that we are self-centred, and our natural inclination is to want to live independently of God (Sequeira [1993] 1999:12). The whole world is under the devil's control, except for those who have given themselves to Jesus. There is no person who is neutral – one is either on God's side or on the devil's side. Therefore, either God is recreating His image in us through Jesus, or we are becoming more and more like Satan. This has been our lot since Adam and Eve rebelled against God by disobeying Him.

According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:12, 13), Satan has used fallen human beings as his tools to develop a kingdom that is based entirely on self-seeking, which the Bible refers to as 'the kingdoms of this world' (Rev 11:15), which is in complete opposition to God's 'kingdom of heaven' (Matt 3:2), based on self-sacrificing love. It can thus be argued that everything that goes to make up this world system – politics, education, commerce, recreation, sports, social clubs, technology, nationalism – is founded on Satan's principle of self-love. At times this principle may not be obvious in the things that we see around us, but as the Bible puts it: 'All that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world' (1 John 2:16). Thus, everything in this world that is not motivated by God's unconditional, eternal, and self-sacrificing love, is based upon lust, or the principle of self-love. Then how does Sequeira define sin? In what follows, I look at Sequeira's definition of sin.

### **7.3.3 Sin Defined**

Sequeira ([1993] 1999:13) asserts that the Bible uses 12 different Hebrew terms in the OT to define sin, and about five Greek terms in the NT. In his view, these different Hebrew and Greek terms for sin can be combined into three basic concepts, all of which are

expressed in Psalm 51:2 and 3: 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me'.

According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:13, 14), the root meaning of the term *iniquity* is 'crooked' or 'bent'. Scripture generally uses this term to describe the natural spiritual condition of human beings. Thus, the term 'iniquity' does not primarily refer to an act of sin, but to a condition of sinfulness. This suggests that, as a result of the fall, men and women are by nature spiritually 'bent'. The love of self is the driving force of our natures, which Paul defined as 'the law of sin and death' that is at war in our lives (Rom 8:2; cf. 7:23). It is this condition that underlies all our sinning and makes us slaves to sin (Rom 3:9-12; 7:14).

When David understood the sinfulness of sin, he cried out: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me' (Ps 51:5). According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:14), this text should be interpreted to mean that David's spiritual condition was right from his conception 'bent' to sin. From his very conception and birth, he was shaped in iniquity and this is the condition in which all human beings have found themselves. We are born with a nature that is bent toward sin or the self. This tendency or leaning towards sin is the root of the many sins that human beings commit. We are sinners by nature before we even break God's law.

In Isaiah 53:6 the Bible comments: 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all'. Sequeira ([1993] 1999:14) contends that this verse makes two points – the first of which is that every one of us has gone astray because we have all followed the natural bent to our own way; the second point is that this bent to follow our own way, this self-centredness, is the iniquity that was laid upon Jesus, our sin-bearer. Thus, when 'He condemned sin in the flesh' on the cross (Rom 8:3), it was this bent to sin that He condemned. Hence, in spite of our sinful state, there is 'no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit' (Rom 8:1).



Sequeira ([1993] 1999:14) suggests that Isaiah 64:6 refers to iniquity as defined above when the prophet avers: 'But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away'. Thus, because we are 'brought forth in iniquity' (Ps 51:5), all the 'righteousnesses' we produce through our own efforts are like filthy rags before God; they are polluted with self-love. In contrast to the filthy garments of our own self-righteousness, Jesus offers us the white robe of His righteousness so that we may truly be clothed and 'the shame of [our] nakedness [does] not appear' (Rev 3:18).

Jesus said: 'Many will say to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and done many wonders in your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!"' (Matt 7:22, 23). The KJV has *iniquity* where the NKJV has *lawlessness*. Sequeira ([1993] 1999:14) argues that God's judgement will expose as iniquity our self-righteous acts – even those done in the Name of Jesus. Jesus will clearly identify such works motivated by self-love as works of iniquity. In other words, iniquity may hide in many good things that fallen human beings do. In our iniquitous state, we may do things that are outwardly good, but which might have been motivated by the self.

In summary then, iniquity is simply the desire to seek our own way (Sequeira [1993] 1999:15). This is because we are born with this bent – the condition that makes it impossible for us, apart from Jesus as our Saviour, to be genuinely righteous, because God's law requires even our motives to be pure and unselfish (Matt 5:20-22, 27, 28). However, the Bible also talks about *sin*, which Sequeira suggests is different from *iniquity*.

Sequeira ([1993] 1999:15) argues that *sin* is the term the Bible uses to describe our failures. According to him (Sequeira [1993] 1999:15), the actual meaning of the term *sin* is 'to miss the mark', like a soldier misses the target he has aimed to shoot. Spiritually, it means falling 'short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23) or failing to measure up to His ideal of selfless love. It is our sinful condition or iniquity that makes it impossible for us to do anything but miss the divine mark unless we have a Saviour, who has dealt with this

condition. Thus, although we have a free will to choose to accept Jesus' righteousness or reject it, we do not have a choice whether to sin or to be righteous, because we are born in slavery to sin, and without the power of the Holy Spirit, no matter how hard we try or how much we will do right, we will fall short of the divine mark (cf. Rom 7:15-24). Victory over sin is to be obtained only in Jesus Christ. As noted previously, the third term the Bible uses to define sin is *transgression*.

*Transgression* signifies a deliberate violation of law, a wilful act of disobedience (Sequeira [1993] 1999:15). This suggests that we have knowledge of what the law requires. In the spiritual realm, transgression is the deliberate violation of God's moral law, which is His measuring stick for righteousness (cf. 1 John 3:4). Thus, it is a knowledge of God's law that turns sin or 'missing the mark' into transgression, which is deliberate disobedience. The sinner knows what the law of God requires of them but they deliberately decide not to keep it. This is because from the time that Adam and Eve sinned against God, we all want to go our own way. We rebelliously break God's law.

What has been discussed so far is that Sequeira argues that the three biblical concepts of sin are *iniquity*, *sin*, and *transgression*: *Iniquity* is primarily a condition of sinfulness – by nature, we are spiritually 'bent'; *sin* can literally be translated as 'to miss the mark', our failure to measure up to God's ideal; and *transgression* is the deliberate violation of God's law, a wilful act of disobedience. Because human beings are iniquitous by nature, they miss the mark set by God; thus, sinning against Him. Again, because of our sinful condition, we deliberately disobey God.

From the NT point of view, sin is either a verb or a noun (Sequeira 2009:354). The Greek verb is ἁμαρτάνω, and it deals with an action: It refers exclusively to sinful behaviour. The Greek noun for sin is ἁμαρτία, which refers to a state of being – a condition. Sin as a noun has to do with the sinful nature, or what the NT calls 'the flesh' (John 3:5, 6; Rom 7:18). To distinguish this sin from acts or behaviour, Sequeira suggests that we might call it 'Sin with [a] Capital S'.

Knight (2008:42, 43) is in harmony with Sequeira when he says that individual acts of transgression are the outward symptoms of SIN – the visible manifestations of a sinful heart and nature, and argues that a human being is not a series of good and evil actions, but a person with a ‘bent’ either toward God or against Him. It is this view of sin that allows for a comprehensive solution, which the Bible suggests that God provided in Jesus Christ.

In light of humankind’s sin problem, Sequeira proposes the postlapsarian view of the humanity of Jesus Christ. The sin problem, especially sin as a condition of our spiritual being had to be resolved by Jesus Christ through His life and death. Thus, in what follows, I present Sequeira’s post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus Christ. It should not be forgotten that Sequeira argues from hamartiology to Christology, but his major concern is soteriology (Sequeira [1993] 1999:9). In his view, sin necessitated the incarnation. If humankind had not fallen into sin, there would have been no incarnation.

#### **7.4 The Humanity of Jesus Christ**

As I have noted above, Sequeira’s concern is soteriology. As seen in his book, *Saviour of the World: The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel* (Sequeira 1996), he does not treat the topic of the humanity of Jesus Christ separately from His soteriological views. He therefore argues: ‘Because the issue of Christ’s human nature is so closely intertwined with implications for our salvation, it is imperative that we study one in light of the other. That is the only way we will ever come to a correct biblical consensus on the human nature of Christ’ (Sequeira 1996:9).

It is noteworthy, therefore, that if it were not for the fact that the human nature that Jesus assumed had implications for our salvation, Sequeira would not study it. He studies it because, in his opinion, it is indispensable to our salvation.

According to Sequeira (2009:74, 75), the mystery of the incarnation can be viewed as the inexplicable biblical fact where, through the divine work of the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb, God united the corporate, sinful, condemned *bios-life* of the human race to the sinless, divine, eternal life of His Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30-35), making sure that through this

incarnation, Jesus assumed the heredity of Adam and gathered it up in Himself. It is clear that, in Sequeira's view, the humanity that Jesus Christ assumed was the sinful and condemned humanity – the humanity that every descendant of Adam and Eve has since the fall. Sequeira is very categorical and there is no way in which his view of Jesus' human nature can be mistaken for anything other than the postlapsarian view.

Sequeira's post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus Christ needs to be clearly explained. He argues in support of his position based on his view of the creation of humankind. This, he does under what is theologically termed the 'in Adam motif'. Thus, it is to the 'in Adam' motif that I now turn.

#### **7.4.1 In Adam**

The term 'Adam' may be used for the name of the first person as an individual, but the general use of it, in many respects, is for humankind (cf. e.g. Gen 5:2). According to Sequeira (2005:82), this is because Adam was created as a corporate human being. He sees this truth confirmed in Acts 17:26 where it is written: 'And He [God] made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings'. Thus, the human race is simply the multiplication of Adam's life. In His plan, God decided to create the entire human race through one person. It is for this reason that all human beings are connected in one way or another – physically as well as spiritually. Human beings inherit from their parents their physical attributes, and somehow, a bent toward sin passes on to them without any exception. All human beings are in the image and likeness of Adam. Before sin entered the world, Adam was in the image and likeness of God. Had sin not entered, Adam's descendants would all have been in God's image and likeness.

Sequeira (2005:82) also argues in favour of Adam being a corporate person based on the plural form of the Hebrew noun translated in English as life (Gen 2:7). The Hebrew term is actually *lives*, instead of *life*. Naturally, Sequeira does realise that the plural can mean singular, but the Hebrew term 'Adam', as already noted, has a plural connotation, and so he still believes that Adam was a corporate person. In other words, all human beings were

created in that corporate person, Adam. Since Adam sinned before he could have any descendants, he passed on to his posterity a life that 1) has already sinned; 2) is condemned; and 3) sentenced to death. Thus, it can be argued that, because of our position in Adam, we all belong on the Death Roll because we, in him, participated in his sin. When Adam sinned, the entire human race sinned in him. It is for this reason that we are all born with a natural bent toward sin. Adam's one act of sin ruined the entire human race.

Barclay (2009c:92) argues in line with Sequeira that the concept of solidarity was dominant in Jewish thought. It is his contention that Jews did not think of themselves as individuals, but always as part of a clan, a family, or a nation, apart from which the individual had no real existence. While this argument, if overstretched, may go overboard especially with regard to the individuality of a person, it is in harmony with Sequeira's teaching on the biblical solidarity of the human race. An individual Jew did not lose their individuality. However, because they all came from one person, Abraham, they were viewed by God as one entity in a covenant with Him.

It is important to mention that Barclay (2009c:92-93) sees a vivid instance in the OT of the idea of solidarity, especially in the case of Achan as related in Joshua 7. The biblical record shows that at the siege of Jericho, Achan kept to himself certain spoils in direct defiance of the commandment of God that everything should be destroyed. The next stage in the campaign was the siege of Ai, which should have fallen without trouble. The assaults against it, however, failed disastrously. The reason, according to Barclay, was because one person, Achan, had sinned and, as a result, the whole nation was branded as having sinned and was punished by God. Achan's sin was not one man's sin, but the nation's. It can thus be argued that God viewed the nation not as a collection of individuals, but a mass of people in solidarity. What the individual did, the nation did. When Achan's sin was admitted, he was not executed alone, but his whole family was executed with him. Again, Achan was not a solitary individual responsible only to himself – he was one member of the community of people from whom he could not be separated. In the NT, Paul also regarded Adam as a corporate person, and not just an individual (cf.

Rom 5:12-21). He was one of all humanity and, because of this, his sin was the sin of all. Thus, we all got implicated in Adam's sin.

This 'in Adam' concept prepares the ground for Sequeira's position of the post-fall human nature of Jesus Christ. It prepares the ground for his 'in Christ' concept, which he believes is built on the firm foundation of the incarnation.

#### **7.4.2 In (Jesus) Christ**

The argument is that just as God created all human beings in one person, Adam, at the incarnation He put the entire humanity into Jesus Christ. In this light, Sequeira (1996:12) argues:

By Christ's *birth*, God united the sinless, divine nature of His Son to our corporate, sinful human nature that needed redeeming. This not only qualified Christ to be mankind's legal substitute and representative, but it also made our sinful nature, which was spiritually dead, alive spiritually, in Christ (see Ephesians 2:5).

It must be reiterated that it was by uniting Jesus' divinity with the corporate humanity of the human race in need of redemption, that Jesus became the last Adam as Paul argued in 1 Corinthians 15:45 (Sequeira 2005:82). In Sequeira's opinion, the phrase 'last Adam' does not refer to Jesus with a human nature like that of the pre-fallen Adam, but it refers to Him as one who assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature we all possess. Thus, Jesus (as the last Adam) is distinguished from the first Adam from the perspective of what happened to the two of them in terms of performance. The first Adam sinned, whereas the last Adam did not sin. The first Adam, in his pre-fallen state had a sinless nature, whereas the last Adam assumed the post-fallen nature of the first Adam.

There is no doubt as to Sequeira's view of Jesus' human nature, for he makes it clear that the humanity that the second Person of the Godhead assumed was fallen humanity – the very humanity that all descendants of Adam and Eve bear. He argues that at the incarnation, Jesus' divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity that needed

redeeming, so that Jesus was both God and man at the same time (Sequeira 1996:164). It is his contention that in the incarnation, Jesus took upon His *own* sinless divine nature our sinful human nature. Thus, in Sequeira's opinion, the incarnation was not about God assuming a sinless human nature, it was about God assuming a fallen, sinful human nature. This argument is based on the fact that when God assumed a human nature, the only human nature that was then in existence was a fallen, sinful human nature. Added to this, it was not possible for Him to assume a nature that was not in existence. This argument does not, however, suggest that God is limited to what is available. In His infinite wisdom, it was indeed possible for God to create a sinless Jesus in the womb of a sinful mother. However, the incarnation was not about God creating a sinless Jesus in the womb of a sinful mother, it was about God uniting Jesus' sinless divine nature to a fallen, sinful human nature in the womb of Mary. As I have already noted above, it is Sequeira's contention that Jesus could only be qualified to be our substitute by assuming our fallen, sinful human nature.

It must be emphasised that Sequeira suggests that Jesus was both God and man at the same time, because at the incarnation His divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity that needed redemption. One question that an inquisitive person could ask Sequeira is whether Jesus would not have been both God and man if, at the incarnation, He had mysteriously united His divinity to sinless humanity – the pre-fall humanity. This point is very important to canvass, because scholars who hold the pre-fall view of Jesus' humanity would argue that He would still have been both God and man if He had assumed a sinless human nature, since humanity is humanity whether it is fallen or not. The only difference is that the first humanity is without sin, while the second is sinful. This point will be considered in the comparative and evaluative chapters.

It is important to state that the postlapsarian view of Jesus Christ's humanity is not unique to Sequeira. Other scholars have also argued that Jesus assumed the fallen human nature that He found. Eastern theology, for example, from Athanasius onward, has taught that the *unassumed* is *unredeemed* (cf. Gulley 2012:434). The implication of this is that in Eastern theology, Jesus Christ assumed the very humanity that He found – the post-

fall human nature. The main argument in this view is that Jesus had to assume a fallen human nature in order to heal it, for that which is not assumed, cannot be healed. This, according to Gulley (2012:432), refers to an internal healing within Jesus Christ, where the divine nature heals the fallen human nature. Whether Gulley's evaluation of the Eastern Christology is as he puts it, is not my concern at this point. What I want to emphasise is that the post-fall view of Jesus Christ's humanity is held by other theologians as well. Of course, it is important to note that Sequeira does agree with Athanasius' view that what was not assumed by Jesus, was not redeemed. However, he does not believe in what is called 'internal healing'. Instead, he believes that, while the incarnation qualified Jesus to be our substitute, it did not save us. Our salvation was accomplished through Jesus' entire holy history, which included His birth, life, death, and resurrection.

As a forerunner, Barth (1958:92) argues in favour of the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus Christ. There are also other modern scholars who are in harmony with Sequeira on the humanity that Jesus Christ assumed. For example, in the early 1960s, a British scholar, Harry Johnson, earned his doctoral degree from the London University for his biblical and historical research on the subject of the humanity of Jesus (Sequeira 1996: 120). In 1962, he published his conclusions in the book, *The Humanity of the Saviour*. On the fly leaf of the book, he wrote:

The eternal Son of God became man for our salvation, but what kind of human nature did He assume? The answer of this book is that He took human nature as it was because of the Fall. Despite this, He lived a perfect, sinless life, and finally redeemed this 'fallen nature' through His Cross; in this victory is the basis of atonement. This Christological position is supported by the New Testament, and there are several indications which suggest that it gives a deeper interpretation to some sections of the gospel narrative. It is clearly taught by Paul, and is the obvious implication of certain aspects of the Christology of Hebrews (Johnson 1962).



Other scholars have followed the lead of Johnson. For example, in 1982, *The International Critical Commentary* changed its position on the human nature of Jesus from a pre-fall to a post-fall position. Swedish theologian, Anders Nygren, presents the post-fall view of the human nature of Jesus in his commentary on Romans. James Dunn, author of the section on Romans in *The Word Biblical Commentary*, clearly defends the view that Jesus assumed our sinful nature to be the Saviour of the world. In his arguments for the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, Sequeira (1996:121) refers to these scholars. It is not my intention to review the views of these scholars, for such a review is beyond the scope of this study. I just want to point out that Sequeira's Christological position has the support of other scholars.

In his *The Christology of the New Testament*, Cullmann takes the position that Jesus Christ assumed the same humanity that fallen humanity bears. He argues: 'But men are sinful; the first Adam, the representative of all men (sic.), sinned, and redemption from sin requires atonement. The Heavenly Man, the divine prototype of humanity, must therefore himself enter sinful humanity in order to free it from its sins' (Cullmann 1963:172).

For Jesus Christ to take the form of a servant (cf. Phil 2:7), He had to assume the form of fallen humanity, which thus suggests that being born 'in the likeness of men' shows that Jesus entered completely into fallen humanity (Cullmann 1963:178). As noted above, there was no 'form of a servant' on earth other than that 'form of a servant' that was common to all fallen, sinful human beings.

Waggoner (1895/1896:12) argues, based on Romans 1:3, that a reading of the history of David, and of the kings who descended from him and who became the ancestors of Jesus, reveals that, on the human side, the Lord was handicapped by His ancestry as badly as anybody can ever be. There were probably people in Waggoner's time who might have thought that he implied that Jesus was a sinner like the rest of the fallen humanity. Thus, he clarifies what he means when commenting on Romans 8:3:

He took the same flesh that all have who are born of a woman. A parallel text to Romans 8:3, 4 is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21. The

former says that Christ was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, 'that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us'. The latter says that God 'made him to be sin for us', although he knew no sin, 'that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (Waggoner 1895/1896:12).

Waggoner's point is that Jesus took the same fallen, sinful human nature that He found. He is against the common idea that 'likeness of sinful flesh' means that Jesus simulated a sinful flesh, that he did not take upon himself the actual sinful flesh, but only what appeared to be such. It is his contention that the Scriptures do not teach this. Thus, in Waggoner's opinion, taking the 'likeness of sinful flesh' on the part of Jesus meant that His human flesh was the very fallen, sinful flesh that all fallen human beings possess. The differences, however, are that, while the rest of us are human beings and possess a fallen, sinful flesh, Jesus *took* the fallen, sinful flesh, for before the incarnation He had always been God, while in the fallen, sinful flesh that He took, He did not commit sin. This teaching is in harmony with Sequeira's view.

Talking about Jesus' likeness to humanity, Jones (2003:27, 28) asserts that it means a likeness to humankind as humankind is in a fallen, sinful nature, and not as humankind was in the original, sinless nature, which came from God's hands at creation, as the author of the letter to the Hebrews stated: 'We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels *for the suffering of death*' (Heb 2:9; emphasis added). It can therefore be argued that, as humankind is, since humankind became subject to death, this is what we see Jesus to be as a human being. What we see, is Jesus made in the nature of humankind, as humankind is since humankind sinned, and not as humankind was before falling into sin, which ruined the entire humanity.

Jones' point is that, to suffer death for a fallen humanity, Jesus had to take the same fallen, sinful humanity that is subject to death. Pre-fall humanity was not subject to death and so Jesus could not have taken upon Himself the pre-fall human nature, because He

came to suffer death. Jones, as a forerunner, taught the same view of Jesus' human nature that Sequeira currently teaches.

Wieland also makes a very impressive statement in accord with Sequeira, arguing: 'Those who heard the apostles saw a stairway, not leading from man up to God but steps He took in descending to the lowest level of our fallen humanity' (Wieland 1989:6-7). This statement may not be that explicit in explaining the nature of Jesus Christ's humanity. Therefore, Wieland (1989:27) argues that the concept of 'Christ's righteousness' has no meaning apart from the unique NT truth taught by Paul and other authors that Christ took our fallen, sinful nature, yet living a sinless life. He asserts that the apostles' message of grace proclaimed what is often neglected or denied within the church today – the truth of Jesus' human nature being *like*, not *unlike*, ours (Wieland 1989:95). In his view, the youth in particular are overjoyed with the NT message that presents Jesus as taking upon Himself our fallen nature, facing our temptations, feeling their full strength, knowing how we feel, and yet gaining the complete victory in sinless character and sinless living (Wieland 1989:106). The Jesus who would take the pre-fall human nature, would be far removed from the people for whom He came to substitute and save. Young people do not find any comfort in such a Jesus, because He did not struggle with sin as they do. They have sinful natures, whereas the pre-fall Jesus did not have a sinful nature. Therefore, He could not be their substitute and example in temptation and suffering.

Sequeira argues strongly in support of the post-fall view of Jesus Christ's humanity from the perspective of temptation. Therefore, in what follows, I will review his position on the temptations of Jesus Christ in light of His humanity.

#### **7.4.3 The Temptations of Jesus: From Within or from Outside?**

There is a disharmony in theological circles regarding whether Jesus Christ was tempted from within or from outside. How then does Sequeira explain how He was tempted? Was He tempted just as we are tempted? If He was tempted in a sinless flesh just like Adam was tempted before the fall, is He of any help to born-again believers who are tempted in their sinful flesh?

#### **7.4.3.1 Tempted Just as Believers are Tempted**

How are believers tempted? The author of the letter to the Hebrew Christians said that Jesus 'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15). James also stated: 'But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed' (James 1:14). Is this the way the Saviour was tempted? Was He ever enticed by His own desires? Before explaining how He was tempted, Sequeira ([1993] 1999:146) makes this statement: 'His humanity was identical in every point to ours (see Hebrews 2:17), so the body He received through Mary was a body of sin (see Galatians 4:4; Romans 1:3) dominated by the law of sin (see Romans 8:2, 3)'. He then adds: 'This is how He could be (and was) tempted in all points as we are (see Hebrews 4:15)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). It is important to observe, however, that Sequeira suggests that Jesus was also born of the Holy Spirit from His very conception (cf. Luke 1:35), implying that, from the very beginning of His life on earth, His mind and soul was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in His human spirit (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). Jesus Christ's life was guided by the Holy Spirit right from childhood. In this light, Sequeira suggests that this was why it could be written of Him: 'And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him' (Luke 2:40; cf. Luke 4:1).

According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147), 'Christ's temptations came to Him the same way ours come to us – through the sinful (selfish) desires of the flesh'. He argues that it was through His bodily wants that the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness to use His divine power to satisfy the self, independently of His Father's will (cf. Luke 4:2-4) (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). Added to this, it was His natural (human) fear of death (self-love of the flesh) that led Jesus three times to plead with His Father to remove the bitter cup of the cross (cf. Mark 14:34-41) (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). Jesus Christ's flesh, because it was the same flesh that post-fall human beings have, did not want to be crucified. However, because throughout His earthly life He had subjected Himself to His Father's will, He allowed His Father's will to prevail as He faced eternal or the second death.

As it can be seen in the statements above, Sequeira leaves no room for doubt as to what he believes regarding the temptations of Jesus Christ. In his opinion, Jesus was indeed tempted in the same way that born-again believers are tempted – it was through the sinful (selfish) desires of the flesh.

Perhaps not wanting to be misunderstood, Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147) states that the self-centred desires of the flesh cannot be satisfied without the consent of the mind. In his view, temptation, in and of itself, does not become a sin until the mind *consents* to it. This is as Scripture puts it: ‘Then, when desire has conceived [in the mind], it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death’ (James 1:15). It can thus be argued that since ‘Christ’s mind was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, His response to every temptation was [a definite] “No!”’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147). Jesus said: ‘Nevertheless, not my will [self], but yours [God’s], be done’ (Luke 22:42). Therefore, sin had no part in His life (cf. John 6:38). Instead, He condemned sin (the law of sin), in the flesh (cf. Rom 8:2, 3). Through His mind, He denied the flesh of its craving. If He had not done this, Satan would have gained victory over Him.

Two texts (Heb 2:18; 1 Pet 4:1) guide Sequeira as he advances his view of how Jesus Christ was tempted: ‘For in that He Himself has *suffered*, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted’ (Heb 2:18; emphasis added); ‘Therefore, since Jesus *suffered* for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has *suffered* in the flesh has ceased from sin’ (1 Pet 4:1; emphasis added).

Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147) suggests: ‘Every time Christ was tempted, He suffered. We know that Christ was tempted as we are; otherwise, His being able “to succour [aid] them that are tempted” would be meaningless’. It is Sequeira’s contention that Peter was talking about the suffering that has to do with Jesus’ victory over sin; it is not limited to suffering on the cross (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147-148): ‘Being tempted in the flesh, Christ suffered in [that same] flesh (see Heb. 2:10), but His victory was in the mind’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:148). In this light, Peter admonished born-again believers to arm themselves with the mind of Jesus (the mind of the Spirit), so that sin may cease in their lives, however,

at the same time knowing that the flesh would suffer (Sequeira [1993] 1999:148). Suffering in the flesh continued throughout Jesus Christ's life on earth. In the same way, it continues in the lives of born-again believers who are not giving in to temptation because the nature of the flesh cannot change – it will always desire sin and must therefore suffer if not satisfied (Sequeira [1993] 1999:148).

Anticipating objections to his view of how Jesus was tempted, Sequeira (1996:178) states that theologians who claim that Jesus Christ assumed the pre-fall nature of Adam, may argue that He did not necessarily have to take our fallen, sinful human nature upon His sinless divine nature in order to be tempted the way that human beings are tempted. Thus, he observes that even if this is true, since Adam demonstrated that a person can be tempted in a sinless human nature, the issue involved in Jesus' temptations is not the same. In his opinion, identifying and equating Adam's temptation and subsequent fall into sin with the temptations and failures we experience, is a great mistake, because Adam's fall into sin was unnatural (Sequeira [1993] 1999:179). His sin contradicted his sinless nature and was therefore inexcusable and inexplicable.

On the contrary, when a fallen, sinful human being yields to temptation, that human being is doing something perfectly natural to their sinful nature (Sequeira [1993] 1999:179). Therefore, it is Sequeira's contention that those who argue that a person does not need to have a sinful nature in order to be tempted, and who therefore argue that Jesus could be tempted and subject to the possibility of falling even though His human nature was sinless, may be making a correct statement *per se*, but in the wrong context. The fact is that Scripture clearly states that Jesus was 'in all points tempted *as we are*' (Heb 4:15; emphasis added). As stated previously, Sequeira (1996:179) contends that Jesus had to be tempted through the flesh even as we are, because for us, temptation is defined as being 'drawn away by [our] own desires and enticed' (James 1:14). For Jesus to be tempted in any way other than the way that fallen, sinful human beings are tempted, would be to contradict the idea of Him being an example to those who are tempted in their fallen, sinful human flesh, even after they have been born of the Holy Spirit. Born-again fallen,

sinful human beings cannot find comfort in Jesus' temptations, which He experienced in His pre-fall human nature.

What was the real issue in Jesus' earthly life? Sequeira (1996:179) observes: 'The real issue in Jesus' earthly life was not that He could be tempted or that He was subject to the possibility of falling as did Adam. The issue was: Could Jesus, in sinful human nature, resist Satan and defeat temptation – the principle of self-seeking?'

According to Sequeira (1996:179), the real problem in as far as the fallen human nature is concerned, is that all human beings enter this world with not only tendencies to sin, but are also under the slavery of sin and Satan (cf. John 8:34; Rom 3:9; 6:16; 7:14; Acts 8:23; 2 Pet 2:19; 1 John 3:6-8). It is Sequeira's contention that this reality of sin in which we are, was not true of Adam before he rebelled against God and fell into sin. Hence, Adam's temptation and fall in Eden must never be identified with our temptations and failures. The sinless Adam had no 'self' that constantly needed to be denied and crucified, but Jesus had to deny Himself through His entire life. He had to have His self-will crucified daily (cf. Luke 9:23). If he failed, He would have been overcome by Satan. It is this 'self' with which Jesus struggled throughout His life. He overcame this 'self' through the Holy Spirit.

It is true that the fundamental issue in every temptation is the same, for temptation is simply being enticed to say 'No' to God and live independently of Him, to follow the self-will instead of God's will of love (Sequeira 1996:179). In that sense, no fundamental difference really exists between Adam's temptation and ours, but a world of difference exists in the actual struggle against the temptation itself (Sequeira 1996:179). Therefore, if sin is saying 'NO' to God or living independently of Him, then our basic definition of a sinful nature must be one in which there is a bent toward self-love and independence from God (Sequeira 1996:179). By their very nature, sinful humans are self-seeking and self-dependent. Sinful tendencies are simply different manifestations of this principle of self-love (Sequeira 1996:179).

The mind controlled by the flesh, what the Bible calls the 'carnal' mind, is 'enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be' (Rom 8:7). This was not true of Adam, as God created him. Thus, to add credence to his argument regarding how Jesus Christ was tempted, Sequeira (1996:180) contrasts Adam's situation with ours.

Sequeira's point is that Adam was tempted to sin in a nature controlled by selfless love, and hence, his failure is inexcusable. On the other hand, Satan tempts us in a nature that is controlled by the 'law of sin' and the love of oneself – a nature that naturally seeks its own way (cf. Is 53:6; Phil 2:21). Adam's sinless nature was subject to the law of God and in fact he delighted in God's law, but our carnal nature is not subject to God's law – it is at war with His law (cf. Rom 8:7). There was a perfect harmony and agreement between Adam's sinless nature and the Spirit of God who dwelt in him, but in the case of the born-again believer, the Spirit and the flesh are at war with each other (cf. Gal 5:17).

To sin was unnatural for Adam: It was an extremely hard thing for him to do. However, for us, sin is enjoyable to our sinful nature: It is the most natural thing for our nature to do (cf. Rom 7:14-23). Adam could be justified by keeping the law, but in our case, 'by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified' (cf. Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16). Adam's sin cannot be explained, for it is 'the mystery of lawlessness', revealing the power of the devil. With us, it is the opposite: There is no mystery involved in why we sin. However, when the righteousness of God is manifested in our sinful flesh, it reveals His power over sin and the devil, which is called the 'mystery of godliness' (1 Tim 3:16). This mystery of godliness was first manifested in Jesus, and through Him, it was made available to us by faith (cf. Col 1:27).

Before closing this section, I need to consider the temptations of Jesus Christ in relation to Adam's. In the view of Sequeira (1996:181), Jesus was both God and man, and therefore possessed an inherent divine power, a power that he could use independently of the Father. According to Sequeira, it could be concluded that His temptations were far different from, and greater than either Adam's or ours, since we do not have this inherent divine power at our disposal. Nevertheless, while this may sound convincing, it is



important to realise that this can be true only in the context of a sinful nature. In the context of a sinless human nature, such a conclusion makes no sense.

Sequeira (1996:181) contends that, if in a sinless human nature, Jesus' temptations were bigger than ours, because of the inherent divine power available to Him, then we need to admit as well that Adam's temptation was also bigger than ours, since his natural ability to do righteousness, which was inherent in his sinless nature, was bigger than ours. If this is the case – that Adam experienced a bigger temptation than we are facing today – then we need to admit that it is much more understandable that he should give in to temptation than we should do so. However, then, this would make his sin more excusable than ours. In Sequeira's view, this reasoning flies in the face of the facts and also undermines God's perfect creation. The truth is that our sin is more excusable than Adam's, because we are born with a nature that leans towards sin, while his pre-fall nature did not lean towards sin. Even after we have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, our nature still leans towards sin and this continues until our death or until Jesus Christ's second coming.

Here is another observation that Sequeira (1996:181) makes: 'If it was extremely hard for Jesus to be God-dependent because of His own inherent divine power [in a sinless human nature], should not the opposite be true of us because of inherent weaknesses [in our sinful nature]? Should it not be very easy for us to be God-dependent?' Yet, as noted by Sequeira, we must all confess that, to live by faith, therefore, to be God-dependent, involves a constant struggle (cf. 1 Tim 6:12), as well as a continuous self-denial and acceptance of the principle of the cross (cf. Luke 9:23).

According to Sequeira (1996:181), it is true that, in tempting Jesus, Satan tried to persuade Him to take matters into His own hands and act independently of His Father. However, we must keep this distinction in mind: If Jesus had assumed a sinless human nature, Satan would be tempting Him to do an unnatural thing, because His human nature would have been naturally unselfish (Sequeira 1996:181). In order to resist temptation, He would then not have needed to deny His own will as He told us that He had to (cf. John 5:30; 6:38).

On the other hand, if Jesus took our sinful nature upon Himself, a nature naturally bent toward yielding to the self-will, then Satan would be tempting Him to do a perfectly desirable thing, something extremely desirable to the self, when he tempted Him to act independently of His Father (Sequeira 1996:181). There is a world of difference between being tempted in a sinless nature as Adam was and being tempted in a sinful nature as we are (Sequeira 1996:181-182).

Thus, our Lord's holy life, if produced in a sinless nature like that of Adam before the fall, can bring no hope or encouragement to believers struggling with temptation (Sequeira 1996:182). According to Sequeira, the devil has used this lie that Jesus came in a sinless flesh, to destroy all belief that sinless living in sinful flesh is possible in the hearts of millions of Christians. Thus, he has opened the door to antinomianism and makes the power of the gospel null and void in their lives (Sequeira 1996:183).

Sequeira (1996:183) argues that, if Jesus assumed a sinless spiritual nature, He became Adam's example before he sinned, but not an example for fallen humanity, in which case, our only hope of holy living would be either through the eradication of our sinful nature (the heresy of 'holy flesh' or perfectionism), or by waiting until the second coming when this corruptible puts on incorruption. If this is true, all admonition in the Bible to holy living becomes futile (Sequeira 1996:183).

However, our Saviour accomplished far more than merely what Adam failed to do in Eden: He produced the perfect righteousness of God in the likeness of His sinful flesh (Sequeira 1996:183). In this lies the true sinlessness of Jesus and the fullness and power of His gospel: God did the 'impossible' by producing perfect righteousness in our sinful flesh in Jesus Christ (Sequeira 1996:183). It was in the fallen human nature that He assumed that Jesus' victory over sin could be said to be a mystery. He did something that no other human being ever did: He wrought perfect holiness in a fallen, sinful human nature.

In conclusion, Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147) asserts:

Christ's flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, *lusted after sin*. But His mind, being spiritual, never yielded to sin, and thus He conquered sin in the flesh through the power of the Spirit (see Luke 4:13, 14). Likewise, if we have the mind of Christ, if we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will make no 'provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof' (Romans 13:14) (emphasis added).

It should be observed that, as much as literature on the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus Christ abounds, there is the question of how in that fallen nature He was not a sinner in need of a saviour, and how He managed to overcome temptation. To respond to questions like these, Sequeira has produced two chapters in his book, *Saviour of the World: The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel* (Sequeira 1996). Under the next heading, I will discuss the objections to the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus Christ. These are objections and responses as Sequeira has met them.

#### **7.4.4 Responses to Objections to the Postlapsarian View**

Sequeira (1996:163) has identified four objections to the postlapsarian view of the humanity of Jesus Christ, which I will review just as he has presented them with the responses, he has given to them. It must be noted that Sequeira does not identify the people who have made those objections. Therefore, I will just follow the objections as he presents them and responds to them.

**Objection 1:** If Jesus took our sinful nature, as we know it, He would have been tainted with sin, and therefore could not be the spotless Lamb of God; He would Himself be a sinner in need of redemption (Sequeira 1996:163).

Sequeira (1996:164) suggests that this argument comes from the doctrine of original sin, which teaches that, due to the fall, the sinful human nature stands condemned because of the indwelling of sin. Hence, it is thought that, if Jesus assumed such a sinful nature,

He would automatically become a condemned sinner as all humans are from their birth and therefore in need of a saviour.

As it will be shown in the evaluation chapters, this objection guides almost every Christologist who has written against the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature in favour of the pre-fall model. The pre-fall model stands and falls on this argument.

In response, Sequeira (1996:164) argues that, while it is biblically correct to say that Jesus Christ assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature which received God's curse, and was therefore condemned to eternal death, He did not become a sinner or blemished sacrifice. This is because the human nature which He assumed, was not His by native right – He took it for our sake so that, by becoming our substitute, He could redeem us (Sequeira 1996:164). Therefore, had Jesus, even by a thought, yielded to the sinful desires of the flesh, He would have become a guilty sinner like us, '[b]ut as long as He did not unite His will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner' (Sequeira 1996:164). It is here where pre-fall Christologists miss the point: They fail to recognise the biblical fact that Jesus Christ was not a fallen, sinful human being in the sense in which all of us are. Instead, He assumed that which He was not by native right.

The argument that the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature makes Him a sinner in need of a redeemer, is not supported by God's word (although it could be reasoned in a philosophical way). In the fallen human nature that Jesus Christ assumed, He perfectly obeyed His Father, for the Bible makes it clear that He did not commit any sin (Heb 4:15). Sequeira (1996:165) suggests that the mystery of how Jesus Christ could assume a fallen human nature and yet not be a sinner in need of redemption Himself, may be explained in this way: Every born-again Christian has become a 'partaker of the divine nature' (2 Pet 1:4). The divine nature is sinless, but in no way does this make the believer innately sinless, even though Scripture considers him/her to be a righteous person and declares him/her to be a child of God. This is because the divine nature does not belong to the believer by native right. In the same way, partaking of our sinful nature did not make Jesus a sinner, because that human nature was not His by native right (Sequeira 1996:165). He

assumed it in order to redeem it. Thus, as long as Jesus Himself did not consent to sin or yield to temptation in any way, He remained spotless (Sequeira 1996:165). He was the spotless Lamb of God, not because He assumed a pre-fall human nature. Instead, He was God's spotless Lamb because in His entire earthly pilgrimage, He obeyed His Father perfectly.

At the incarnation, He took upon Himself our sinful nature as we know it in order that He might be the Saviour of the world, and then, instead of allowing that fallen human nature to contaminate Him, He cleansed it on the cross (Sequeira 1996:165). Sequeira observes this in Jesus' miracles of healing lepers, where He touched them, and instead of them contaminating Him, they got cleansed. According to the OT laws (Lev 13:1-46), anyone who touches a leper would become unclean, but Jesus did not become unclean (cf. e.g. Mark 1:40-45). Thus, Sequeira argues that the fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus Christ took upon His sinless divine nature did not contaminate Him.

It must be noted that, because Jesus 'became' (John 1:14) or 'was made' (KJV) flesh, and took on Himself something that was not intrinsically His own, Paul is very careful to use the word 'likeness' when he states that God sent His Son in 'the likeness of sinful flesh' to condemn 'sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3) (Sequeira 1996:165). Thus, while Scripture identifies Jesus with our total sinful situation, apart from actually sinning, in order that He might truly redeem us from every aspect of sin (cf. Heb 2:14-18), Scripture makes it very clear that He was not altogether like us as He was not a sinner and will never be one (Sequeira 1996:165). The Bible uses qualifiers to distinguish Jesus Christ from the rest of us who have fallen, sinful human natures.

The argument based on the symbolism of the spotless Lamb deserves a comment. Sequeira (1996:165-166) argues that those who insist that, by taking our sinful nature, Jesus would have disqualified Himself from being the spotless Lamb of God, have failed to see the true significance of the sanctuary symbolism with reference to Jesus' redeeming work. As already noted, because of the fall, all humanity stands condemned and under the curse of the law (cf. Rom 5:18; Gal 3:10).

God's law demands two requirements if humans in their fallenness are to be redeemed from this condemnation and curse, and have their status changed to justification to life in Jesus Christ: First, the law requires a perfect obedience in order for someone to qualify for life. Jesus Christ accomplished this with more than 30 years of active, positive obedience to God's law in our fallen, sinful human nature which He assumed (Sequeira 1996:166). This obedience, however, even though it was absolutely perfect, could not cleanse our humanity from the curse and condemnation of the law. Second, the law requires death – eternal death – as the wages of sin (cf. Rom 6:23). Only death could set us legally free from sin (cf. Rom 6:7). Therefore, until Jesus took this condemned humanity to the cross and surrendered it to the full wages of sin, He could not qualify to be our righteousness and justify the ungodly (cf. Rom 4:5, 25). Jesus satisfied this further demand of the law – its justice – by dying for us on the cross (Sequeira 1996:166). Thus, by both His doing which satisfied the positive demands of the law and by His dying which met the justice of the law, Jesus obtained eternal redemption for humankind (cf. Heb 9:12) and forever became the Saviour of the world (cf. John 4:42; 5:24).

Sequeira (1996:166) suggests that it is only in light of this truth that we can understand the OT sanctuary symbolism. By His perfect active obedience to the law, Jesus fulfilled the symbolism of the spotless lamb. This qualified Him to meet the justice of the law on our behalf. In Sequeira's view, nowhere in Scripture do we find it hinted that the spotless lamb represented the sinless human nature of Jesus. This is only an assumption that cannot be proven explicitly from the word of God (Sequeira 1996:166). What the spotless lamb represented had to do with our salvation: It represented the perfect obedience of Jesus which the law demands of us in order to qualify us for eternal life. When the spotless lamb was slain, it represented the blood or death of Jesus which cleanses us from sin (cf. Heb 9:22-28) (Sequeira 1996:166).

According to Sequeira (1996:166), this twofold symbolism of the OT was replaced by the symbolism of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament (NT), where the bread we eat represents Jesus' body in which the perfect will of God – the law – was fulfilled (cf. Heb 10:5-9), while the wine (or grape juice in the case of the SDA Church) that we drink,

represents the sacrificial death of Jesus which met the justice of the law (Matt 26:27) (Sequeira 1996:166).

In the view of Sequeira (1996:167), had Jesus taken Adam's sinless nature upon Himself as our representative and substitute, the law would have required a positive obedience from Him as it did from Adam. However, since Jesus came to redeem the fallen humanity – and not a sinless humanity – our sins which proceed from the flesh had to be condemned at their very source – the flesh. This is what Jesus did by assuming that same sinful flesh and submitting it to His death on the cross, thereby condemning sin (singular) in the flesh (Rom 8:3) (Sequeira 1996:167).

It should be noted that for Sequeira, sin (singular) was condemned in the flesh that Jesus assumed. In His flesh, which was actually our flesh, since He had not always been a human being, but only became or was made one for the sake of saving fallen human beings, God condemned sin (singular).

It has been argued by some scholars that, if Jesus had assumed our sinful nature as we know it, His perfect obedience would have been polluted, because the channel through which it would be performed would be corrupt (Sequeira 1996:167). This, however, cannot be substantiated by Scripture. According to Sequeira, while it is true that, in itself, Jesus' perfect obedience could not justify the fallen race, because of the *corrupt channel* or the sinful human nature that He assumed, God provided in the salvation package both the dying and doing of Jesus. Nevertheless, our Saviour's perfect performance was in no way marred by the sinful nature He assumed. Not for a moment did He consent to temptation, not even by a thought did sin rest in His mind (Heb 4:15).

According to the Greek NT scholar, Wuest (1947:95), '[t]he words "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15) mean that in our Lord's case temptation never resulted in sin'. Thus, Jesus produced a perfectly sinless character in the corporate sinful nature that He assumed, and by doing this, He fully satisfied the positive requirements of the law as our substitute – this qualified Him to be the spotless Lamb of God.

After affirming that, on the cross, Jesus, as the Lamb of God, took away the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29), Sequeira (1996:167) asks two very important questions to those who argue that Jesus assumed a sinless flesh: ‘How could Christ *take away* “the sin” of the world if it was not there in the flesh which He assumed? How could Christ condemn “sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3) in a sinless flesh?’

Sequeira (1996:167) responds to his own questions: ‘But Christ did take away our sin by condemning it on the cross. He could do this because He assumed our flesh which has sin dwelling in it (see Romans 7:17, 20). He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself’ (cf. Heb 9:26).

According to Wuest (1947:40), the putting away of sin denotes both the sinful nature as well as sinful acts. ‘The verb [tithemi] means ‘to do away with something laid down, prescribed, established. Sin had established itself in the human race through the disobedience of Adam, a sinful nature and sinful acts’. As Jesus partook of and overcame our sinful human nature, He is able, as our High Priest, to both understand the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15), as well as aid those who are tempted (Heb 2:18). It has been suggested that the term ‘infirmities’ must not be limited to physical weaknesses such as fatigue or aging, as some scholars argue (Sequeira 1996:168). Pre-fall Christologists tend to limit this term to Jesus Christ’s physical weaknesses; as such, they fail to understand and accept that it was possible for Him to assume a post-fall human nature and not be a sinner.

Wuest (1947:98), states: ‘The word “infirmities” is ἀσθένεια, “moral weakness which makes men [and women] capable of sinning”, in other words, the totally depraved nature’. By interpreting the expression ‘He Himself also is compassed with infirmity’, Wuest (1947:98) asserts: ‘The high priest has infirmity, sinful tendencies, lying around him. That is, he is completely encircled by sin since he has a sinful nature which if unrepressed, will control his entire being’.



Fact is that Jesus had to repress the sinful nature that He assumed in order for Him to live a life of obedience to His heavenly Father. Had He, in any way, failed to repress the cravings of the sinful flesh, He would have failed to set an example of obedience to born-again sinful human beings. The good news for all of us who were born after Adam's fall is that Jesus assumed the very sinful, human nature that is ours by native right.

Thus, we may rest assured that our redemption in Jesus' holy history was both perfect and complete (Sequeira 1996:168). Not only do we as believers have in Jesus' righteousness a 'justification of life' (Rom 5:18), but in Him we can likewise claim liberation from our bondage to sin, so that we may now live unto God (cf. Rom 6:7-13) (Sequeira 1996:168).

After these concluding remarks from Sequeira on the first objection to the post-fall view of the human nature of Jesus Christ, I will proceed to review the second objection.

**Objection 2:** Although Jesus did assume humanity and was physically like us, the Scriptures refers to Him as 'that Holy One' (Luke 1:35), 'without sin' (Heb 4:15), and 'separate from sinners' (Heb 7:26) (Sequeira 1996:168).

To this second objection Sequeira (1996:168) raises his own question: 'But do such statements of Scripture suggest that Christ's human nature itself was sinless?' (Sequeira 1996:168). He suggests that, in order to understand the statements of Scripture in question correctly, we must take other Bible texts into account which identify Jesus with our sinful human condition, because there must be no contradiction in Scripture (Sequeira 1996:169). He then refers to texts like 2 Corinthians 5:21, 'He [God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us', Romans 8:3, '...God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh', and Hebrews 2:17, 'Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren'.

Sequeira (1996:169) observes that some scholars try to reconcile these apparently opposing views, arguing that Jesus took our sinful nature only as far as our physical

makeup is concerned. What this means is that He was prone to fatigue, aging, and such like, but morally and spiritually He took the sinless nature of Adam before the fall. Nevertheless, such a view goes far beyond what can be supported by an honest interpretation of these Scriptures (Sequeira 1996:169). Furthermore, in Scripture, our physical and spiritual natures are related so that if the one is sinful, so is the other (Sequeira 1996:169). Hence, 'this corruptible' is identified with 'mortal', while 'incorruption' is identified with 'immortality' (cf. 1 Cor 15:53). Similarly, 'the body of sin' (Rom 6:6) is identified with 'the body of this death' (Rom 7:24) (Sequeira 1996:169).

According to Sequeira (1996:169), a true harmony of these two groups of texts, which on the surface seem to contradict each other, is possible only when we take two important facts into consideration: In the first place, Jesus was both God and man, thus having two distinct natures united in one Person – His own divine nature, which was sinless, and our corporate sinful nature, which He assumed. Second, although Jesus took our sinful nature upon Himself, this must not be identified with our *sinning* nature. Our sinful nature has sinned and continues to sin, but His human nature did not sin, implying that, in performance, His humanity can be called sinless. According to Scripture, Jesus understands our weakness since He took our sinful nature that is dominated by the 'law of sin' (Rom 7:23). Nevertheless, not for a moment His mind consented to sin, so that His flesh was totally deprived of sin (cf. 1 Pet 4:1).

It is the opinion of Sequeira (1996:169) that the problem of reconciling these two sets of apparently contradictory texts will cease, once we come to grips with the two important facts – the sinlessness of Jesus' divinity and the perfect sinlessness of the character He produced in His humanity. Clearly, the texts referring to Jesus' sinlessness are dealing either with His sinless divine nature or His sinless performance or character (Sequeira 1996:169-170), while the texts that identify Jesus with our sinful condition, are referring to Him being equipped with our sinful human nature which He assumed and which is 'sold under sin' (Rom 7:14) (Sequeira 1996:170).

After reviewing the texts that refer to Jesus' sinful human nature that He assumed, Sequeira finds it necessary to examine the key texts that refer to Jesus' sinlessness to understand if the conclusion made regarding the other group of texts, is valid. In other words, do they indeed refer either to His divine, sinless nature or to His sinless performance that He produced in our sinful nature, rather than to the human nature He assumed at the incarnation?

- *Luke 1:35*. This text refers to Jesus' conception in Mary's womb being announced by the angel. The announcement was made in connection with Jesus being called 'the Son of God' – a term applying to His divinity (Sequeira 1996:170). Thus, it was Jesus' divinity, the fact that the human child to be born was also the divine Son of God, that the angel was referring to when he called Jesus 'that Holy One'. The angel was not speaking about Jesus' human nature. Therefore, it is incorrect to argue that Jesus' human nature was inherently sinless on the basis of the angel's statement (Sequeira 1996:170).
- *John 8:46*. Jesus asked the Jews: 'Which of you convicts me of sin?' Here He challenged the Jewish leaders who were incapable of discerning His divine nature or appreciating His perfect character (Sequeira 1996:170). It is Sequeira's contention that Jesus was referring to His performance which was without sin, and not to His human nature, which incidentally, was made in every respect like those of His brethren (cf. Heb 2: 17) (Sequeira 1996:170).
- *John 14:30*. Talking to His disciples, Jesus said: 'The ruler of this world [Satan] is coming, and he has nothing in me'. According to Sequeira (1996:170), Jesus was referring to His victory over temptation – His sinless performance. He Himself explains this passage in the next verse: 'As the Father gave me commandment, so I do' (John 14:31). Thus, this text refers to His perfect obedience, not His human nature (Sequeira 1996:170).
- *Hebrews 7:26*. This verse refers to Jesus who was 'separate[d] from sinners, holy, harmless, undefiled', all of which suggest His perfect performance and His righteousness (Sequeira 1996:170). Jesus was unlike, or separate from, the sinful human race He came to redeem in His sinless living, and not in the nature which He took (Sequeira 1996:170). Otherwise, Hebrews 2:17 makes no sense when it

states that 'in all things He had to be made like His brethren'. Hebrews 1:9 explains in what sense Jesus was separate from sinners: 'You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions'. Thus, the perfect character, Jesus, produced in our sinful humanity, separated Him from the rest of humanity (Sequeira 1996:171).

- *2 Corinthians 5:21*. This text states that Jesus 'knew no sin'. The context of this statement is about Jesus, our sin-bearer. According to Sequeira (1996:171), Jesus knew no sin with reference both to His divine nature as well as to His character or performance. Yet the Bible is clear that He 'bore our sins in His own body on the tree' (1 Pet 2:24). In Sequeira's view, Jesus did this by bearing our sinful humanity on the cross – the humanity He assumed at the incarnation (Sequeira 1996:171). That is why Peter added in this very same text 'that we, having died to sins, might live' (emphasis added). The only way we could have died to sin by Jesus' death is if His humanity was really our corporate sinful humanity that stood condemned (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14) (Sequeira 1996:171). This is why Paul told us: God 'made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us' (2 Cor 5:21). This is the only way we could have died to the law 'through the body of Christ' (Rom 7:4).
- *1 John 3:5*. John averred: 'In Him there is no sin'. According to Sequeira (1996:171), the context of this statement indicates that *sin* here refers to sinning and not to the human nature Jesus took. This seems to be the case, because the preceding sentence in the verse states: 'And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins [plural, referring to our acts of sin]' (1 John 3:5). Jesus did not commit even a single sin, but He came to take away our sins. He did this, of course, by taking our sinful, corporate humanity to Himself and executing that humanity on the cross (Sequeira 1996:171).
- *Hebrews 9:14*. This text refers to Jesus who 'offered Himself without spot to God'. This expression, as well as the one which follows, to 'cleanse your conscience from dead works', suggests performance rather than nature. Thus, Jesus was 'without spot' in His performance, although tempted in every way as we are (cf. 1 Pet 1:19; Heb 5:8, 9) (Sequeira 1996:171).

It is necessary to add John 1:14 to the above texts. Some scholars interpret the statement, 'the only begotten of the Father', to mean that Jesus' humanity was unlike ours (Sequeira 1996:171). Their argument is that the Greek term for *begotten* can be translated with *one of a kind*, thus insisting that, since Jesus was *one of a kind*, His spiritual human nature must have been different from ours, that is, spotless or sinless. However, the problem with such an interpretation, in Sequeira's view, is that John does not argue that it was Jesus' human nature or His humanity that made Him *one of a kind*. He relates that, what made Jesus, the God-Man, *one of a kind*, was the fact that 'the Word [Jesus as the divine Son of God] was made flesh [human]' (Sequeira 1996:171-172).

Sequeira (1996:172) further argues that, if the term *begotten* is referring to Jesus' sinless human nature which was *unlike* ours and therefore *one of a kind*, then we must admit that Isaac, the Son of Abraham, also had a sinless human nature since the author of the letter to the Hebrews used the same Greek term, translated with *begotten*, when referring to Isaac: 'By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only *begotten* son' (Heb 11:17; emphasis added). However, the truth seems to be that what made Isaac *one of a kind* was not his human nature, but the fact that he was a miracle child born after Sarah had passed the age of child-bearing (cf. Rom 4:19) (Sequeira 1996:172). Isaac was not the only child of Abraham, but he was unique (*one of a kind*) because, as the promised child he was born in a manner that defies all reason. In the same way, what made Jesus *one of a kind*, was His unipersonality, the fact that He was both God and man at the same time (Sequeira 1996:172). He was unique, because He was born not in the same way every other human being is born – He was born of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). He was, therefore, God and was born of a woman (Gal 4:4), thus also being human, the 'Word became flesh', making Him *unique* or *one of a kind* (John 1:14) (Sequeira 1996:172).

Based on the foregoing discussion of the texts, Sequeira (1996:172) concludes: 'It seems clear that none of these texts refers to Christ's human nature itself; they cannot be used to prove that His spiritual human nature was sinless like that of Adam before the Fall'. When correctly harmonised, Scripture teaches that Jesus' sinlessness was in character

or performance, produced in a human nature, exactly like the one He came to save (Sequeira 1996:172). He 'condemned sin' in the human nature which is dominated by the principle of sin, or love of the self (Sequeira 1996:172).

Sequeira (1996:172) admits that God's righteousness, manifested in sinful flesh, can be truly called 'the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh' (1 Tim 3:16). The Greek term translated as mystery refers to 'something that can be seen and known, but that cannot be explained' (Sequeira 1996:172). How Jesus produced a sinless life in a sinful human nature is indeed a mystery, but it is a biblical fact. If He lived a sinless life in a human nature that was spiritually sinless, His holy living would not be a mystery (Sequeira 1996:172). This argument of Sequeira deserves some evaluation, which I will do in the appropriate chapter. Was it the manifesting in the flesh (becoming human) that was a mystery, or living a sinless life in sinful human nature? Is it not already a mystery just for God to become human? I will have to find out why it would not be a mystery for Jesus to live a holy life in a human nature that was spiritually sinless.

This brings me to the third and fourth objections raised against Sequeira's idea that Jesus assumed our sinful, fallen human nature at the incarnation.

**Objection 3:** Jesus could not have resisted temptation had His human nature been sinful in all respects as ours (Sequeira 1996:175).

In Romans 2 and 3, Paul demonstrated that both Jews and Gentiles are 'all under sin' so that 'there is none righteous, no, not one' (Rom 3:9, 10). Thus, so far as the sinful human nature is concerned, 'There is none who does good, no, not one' (Rom. 3:12) (Sequeira 1996:176).

Yet the same apostle also informs us that God did, through Jesus, the very thing that sinful human beings, in and of themselves, could not do (cf. Rom 7:14-25). The very thing that the law could not do because of the weakness of human nature, God did (cf. Rom 8:3). God did it in Jesus' humanity which was 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Sequeira

1996:176), and He did this so that the 'righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us [believers] who [like Jesus] do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Rom 8:3, 4).

According to Sequeira (1996:176), Jesus' sinless living did not prove that sinful human beings, in and of themselves, can resist temptation and live above sin. Instead, His sinless living demonstrated that sinful human beings, *indwelt and controlled by God's Spirit*, can overcome all the powers of the devil that he musters through the sinful flesh (Sequeira 1996:176). Even Jesus Himself realised that in and of Himself He could do nothing (John 5:19, 30) and He lived because of the Father (John 6:57). Even all His works proceeded from the Father (cf. John 14:10, 11). Luke, after relating the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, concluded: 'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14), and speaking of Jesus' death, the author of the letter to the Hebrews stated: 'He by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone' (Heb 2:9).

Sequeira (1996:176) recounts that Jesus Christ could not have overcome temptation if He had not depended on the Father. This also applies to all humankind, who cannot overcome temptation if they do not depend on the Holy Spirit. It is only in the context of God's help that Jesus could resist all temptations and thus make it possible for the born-again believer to live above sin, 'by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust' (2 Pet 1:4).

It should be emphasised that Paul made it clear that humans, in and out of themselves, cannot resist temptation, but he made it equally clear that what is impossible with human beings is possible with God: 'Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh' (Gal 5:16) (Sequeira 1996:176), and 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts' (Rom 13:14).

In light of the above texts, then, if any scholar would dare to say that sinful humanity cannot resist temptation or live above sin as long as they walk in the Spirit, they are

elevating the power of the devil and sinful flesh above the power of God (Sequeira 1996:176-177). Paul declared: 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death' (Rom 8:2) and a few verses later, he adds: 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you' (Rom 8:11).

Sequeira (1996:177) asserts that the foregoing is the glorious truth of the gospel which gives all believers an everlasting hope in this world of sin. The ultimate power of sin is eternal death. Therefore, anyone who can conquer the eternal or the second death, can conquer sin. God allowed the sins of the whole world to put Jesus to the grave (eternal death), but they could not keep Him there because of Himself, He did not commit any sin. Thus, Jesus' resurrection is the greatest proof that all our sins were conquered in Him (Sequeira 1996:177).

**Objection 4:** Jesus is the second Adam. He therefore took the sinless spiritual nature of the first Adam (Sequeira 1996:177).

This objection seems to be based on some kind of logic where those scholars who raise it suggest that, since the first Adam was created sinless in nature, then the second Adam must also have taken at least a sinless spiritual nature. To this objection, Sequeira (1996:177) responds: 'It's true that Christ is the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), but the New Testament clearly qualifies in what sense Jesus is like Adam. To go beyond this qualification is to take liberties not warranted by God's Word'.

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul compared and contrasts Adam to Jesus. This passage, according to Sequeira (1996:177), clearly states in what sense Jesus resembles Adam: It is not in nature, but in representation. All human beings were present in the first Adam when he ruined his posterity by his representative sin. In the same way, God united all human beings to Jesus, qualifying Him to be the second or 'last' Adam (cf. 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:3). By Jesus' representative obedience, all human beings were legally justified to



life in Him, just as by Adam's sin, all human beings were made sinners (cf. Rom 5:19) (Sequeira 1996:177). To go beyond this comparison and identify Jesus' human nature with Adam's sinless nature before his fall, is to add to Scripture an idea that is not present in the texts (Sequeira 1996:177).

According to Sequeira (1996:177), the Bible does not compare Jesus in any way with Adam in terms of nature. On the contrary, Jesus is called the Son of Abraham and of David (cf. Matt 1:1; Rom 1:3), both of whom had sinful flesh (Sequeira 1996:177). He is referred to as being made 'in the likeness of men' (Phil 2:7). Scripture refers to Him that 'in all things He had to be made like His brethren' (Heb 2:17). Clearly then, we cannot say that Jesus took Adam's sinless nature in the incarnation on the basis that He was called the second Adam (Sequeira 1996:178).

It is important to add a fifth objection, which has just casually been alluded to, but which Sequeira deals with in his book, *Built Upon the Rock: The 28 Fundamental Adventist Beliefs in Light of the Gospel* (Sequeira 2009).

**Objection 5:** Jesus was simply in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), so His human nature was not identical to ours (Sequeira 2009:357).

The argument seems to be that the term 'likeness' refers to the fact that the human nature of Jesus *resembled* a sinful flesh, but in fact it was not (Sequeira 2009:357). Advocates of the pre-fall view of Jesus' human nature admit that His physical human nature was that of an ordinary man (prone to fatigue, to aging, and so forth), but that His human nature was spiritually like that of Adam before the fall (Sequeira 2009:357).

Sequeira (2009:357) responds by observing that the problem with this argument is that the Greek term, being translated with 'likeness', also appears in Philippians 2:7 in the same dative case, where we read that Jesus 'made Himself of no reputation, taking the form (*substance*) of a bondservant, and coming in the *likeness* of men' (emphasis added).

Sequeira asks and responds: 'Did Christ just look like a man, or was He really a man? The answer is obvious' (Sequeira 2009:357).

Sequeira's contention is that, if 'likeness' in Romans 8:3 only refers to 'resemblance', then it must mean the same thing in Philippians 2:7 (Sequeira 2009:357). In other words, if being in the likeness of sinful flesh means that He did not take a fallen, sinful nature, but that His nature only resembled it, then we must conclude that He only resembled a human being when in fact He was not a human being.

According to Sequeira (2009:357), the most probable explanation of Paul's use of likeness in Romans 8:3 is that he wants to distinguish Jesus from the rest of human beings by pointing out that though the Son of God assumed the same fallen human nature that is ours, in His case, that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him – He never ceased to be God. Thus, while Jesus truly assumed our fallen, sinful human nature, He was different from us, because the nature He assumed was not His by native right. He assumed our nature in order to reconcile us back to the Holy Trinity by first obeying God in that nature, and then dying on Calvary's cross. At the cross, our fallen, sinful human nature, which Jesus assumed, was purged of the tendency to sin. When Jesus was resurrected, our fallen, sinful human nature got glorified.

Sequeira (2009:357) counsels: 'We must keep in mind that Jesus was unique. He was both divine and human. As God He possessed an eternal, sinless, divine nature by native right; at the same time, He was a man with a sinful human nature, which He took on at the incarnation'. He was sent by God 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom 8:3) and came 'in the likeness of men' (Phil 2:7). The two natures are defined in the NT by the terms 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man'. 'This is why we must never say or teach that Jesus had a sinful human nature, when we refer to His humanity. Otherwise we make Him into a common sinner, like us, in need of a Saviour' (Sequeira 2009:357-358).

According to Sequeira (2009:358), whenever the NT refers to Jesus' human nature, it always uses qualifiers like 'And the Word *became* flesh' (John 1:14; emphasis added);

‘For He (the Father) *made* Him who knew no sin to be sin for us’ (2 Cor 5:21; emphasis added); and ‘Therefore, in all things He had to be *made* like His brethren’ (Heb 2:17; emphasis added). All these qualifiers specify that Jesus assumed His human nature in order to become legally qualified to serve as humans’ Saviour and substitute (Sequeira 2009:358), ‘But that sinful nature He assumed was never His but ours – a nature he came to redeem. By right Jesus’ nature is divine’ (Sequeira 2009:358).

Zurcher comes to the same conclusion regarding the term ‘likeness’ in Romans 8:3. He asserts: ‘There has been much discussion on the meaning of the word *likeness* (ὁμοιότητα). Obviously, it emphasizes resemblance, similarity, identity, but not difference’ (Zurcher 1999:292). He argues that, in the three NT passages where the expression is used, it always indicates an identity of nature that has to do with the *resemblance* to the flesh (Rom 8:3), with man (Phil 2:7), or with temptation (Heb 2:17). In order to be in a position to help Abraham’s descendants, He had to be made like His brothers in every way (cf. Heb 2:16, 17).

In Zurcher’s view, there was definitely some difference between Jesus and carnal humankind. He argues: ‘However, it is important to understand that Paul did not say that Jesus *resembled* carnal man. Nor that His flesh *resembled* that of sinful man, defiled by the life of sin, and slave of evil propensities’ (Zurcher 1999:292; emphasis added). The apostle limited the resemblance to the flesh in which ‘the law of sin’ dwelt and where ‘the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life’ (1 John 2:16, KJV) held sway (Zurcher 1999:292).

According to James 1:15, lust is only the father of sin, and not sin itself, just as sin is the father of death, and not death itself (Zurcher 1999:292). Lusts are temptations to which all human beings are subject and that Jesus Himself had to confront, since He was ‘tempted in every way, just as we are’ (Heb 4:15) (Zurcher 1999:292). But unlike all others, Jesus never allowed His evil tendencies, although hereditary and potentially sinful, to become sins (Zurcher 1999:292). He always knew ‘enough to reject the wrong and

choose the right' (Is 7:15), from the day of His birth until His death on the cross (Zurcher 1999:292).

It is important to look at how Sequeira views the fact that God created a complete human being with only one human parent. This is important, because Erickson, as it will be noted in chapter 8, takes a view that has to be evaluated in the context of what Sequeira and Gulley say on the topic. Sequeira does not treat this topic in his works as conspicuously as Erickson does. The statement that he makes on the topic is not even detailed, to the extent that it is difficult to evaluate. Therefore, I will simply reproduce what he avers with comments.

#### **7.4.5 How God Created a Complete Human Being with Only One Human Parent**

I have read the works of at least two scholars, one of whom is Erickson (see chapter 8), which go beyond what the Bible states about how God created a complete human being with only one human parent. It is for this reason that I have decided to review what Sequeira argues on the topic so that, in the evaluation chapters, the views of the two scholars on this topic may be compared, contrasted, and evaluated in the context of what Scripture tells us. I will do the same when I review Erickson's and Gulley's works (chapters 8 and 9).

Sequeira is content to simply believe that God prepared the body of Jesus in Mary's womb, asserting: 'The body God prepared for Jesus in Mary's womb was the corporate body of the human race' (Sequeira 2009:277). He further observes: 'His [Jesus'] humanity was identical in every point to ours (see Hebrews 2:17), so the body He received through Mary was a body of sin (see Galatians 4:4; Romans 1:3) dominated by the law of sin (see Romans 8:2, 3)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:146). Sequeira opines that it was that body that qualified Jesus to become humankind's substitute and Redeemer, whom Paul referred to as the 'last Adam' (1 Cor 15:45). Similar statements are scattered in all of Sequeira's Christological and soteriological works. In his view, the body that God prepared for Jesus in Mary's womb determined how Jesus dealt with the dual problem of sin:

Certainly, He is the Saviour of the world, and for Jesus legally to be able to fill this role, the Father had to first qualify Him to serve. This He did by uniting in the womb of His mother, Mary, the Son's divine life (Greek, ζωή) with condemned, corporate human life (Greek, βίος) (Sequeira 2009:23).

Sequeira (2009:359) concludes: 'In the incarnation the *bios*-life of the corporate human race was united with the divine life of Christ in Mary's womb'. This thought is implied in other statements that Sequeira makes, for instance: 'The incredibly good news of the everlasting gospel is that God united the corporate, condemned life (Greek, βίος) of the Adamic race with the sinless, divine, eternal life (ζωή) of Christ, at the incarnation' (Sequeira 2009:37; emphasis added); and 'God at the incarnation united the holy, immortal, divine nature of Jesus to corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human nature' (Sequeira 2009:46). He states:

Some 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second person of the Godhead, entered Satan's domain as a human baby. This is the mystery of the incarnation, where through the Holy Spirit, God united the corporate, sinful, condemned *bios*-life of the human race to the sinless, divine, eternal life of His Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30-35) (Sequeira 2009:74).

Sequeira (2009:97) adds that 'in the incarnation God united the sinless, eternal, divine life (ζωή) of Jesus to the corporate, sinful, perishing life (βίος) of the human race'; 'At the incarnation, divinity and corporate humanity were joined together in one Person, Jesus Christ – the second Adam' (Sequeira 2005:117); and 'In order to fulfill the plan of salvation, as planned by God from the foundation of the world, Jesus assumed [in Mary's womb] this sinful condemned humanity at the incarnation in order to save fallen humanity' (Sequeira 1996:196).

As can be seen from the statements Sequeira makes on what kind of humanity Jesus Christ received from Mary, there is no hint as to what he believes in terms of how the

body of Jesus was prepared in Mary's womb. Sequeira does not go into the science of human reproduction. The Holy Spirit prepared a human body in Mary's womb, which was mysteriously joined to Jesus' divine life. The result was the God-Man. What should be emphasised for the purposes of this study is that Sequeira does not delve into the intricacies of human reproduction. He accepts the incarnation as a fact recorded in Scripture to be accepted by faith. What is important to him is that the integral part of the message of righteousness by faith is that 'Christ, in order to save humanity from sin's guilt and punishment, as well as from its power and slavery, assumed the self-same, sinful nature of the human race He came to redeem' (Sequeira 1996:6).

An important aspect of the humanity of Jesus Christ has to do with His death and resurrection. Therefore, in what follows, I will look at Sequeira's view of the kind of death that Jesus died. I will also briefly look at what he believes was the nature of Jesus' resurrection. It is also important to look at what kind of nature Jesus retains after His resurrection and ascension to heaven. Before stating what Sequeira believes was the nature of Jesus' death, I will look at what he believes death is in a general sense.

#### **7.4.6 Jesus Christ's Death and Resurrection**

In his theology, Sequeira considers Jesus' death and resurrection as very important aspects of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. In his view, the incarnation and the life of Jesus have no value without His death and resurrection. These are very important aspects of his Christology. This is because the complete gospel comprises the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

##### **7.4.6.1 Death**

Sequeira discovered three types of death in the Bible: 1) spiritual death; 2) physical death; and 3) eternal death. I will consider each of the three types of death as Sequeira understands them.

###### *7.4.6.1.1 Spiritual Death*

Sequeira (2009:43) observes: 'Since sin is the act of turning one's back on God, the immediate result was alienation from God, or spiritual death'. By spiritual death, he means that when Adam and Eve sinned, the 'Holy Spirit departed from our first parents, and their lives were plunged into darkness' (Sequeira 2009:43). Adam and Eve were now spiritually dead in the sense that God's Spirit no longer had a place in their characters, and they became unable to reflect His glory (Rom 3:23). Since Adam and Eve's children were all born after the fall and inherited a fallen human nature (Gen 5:3), today every child is born separated from God, devoid of the Holy Spirit, and spiritually dead (Sequeira 2009:43). Thus, Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus that, before their conversion, they were all 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph 2:1).

The question that naturally arises has to do with whether Jesus, who Sequeira suggests assumed a fallen humanity, was spiritually dead like the rest of the fallen humanity. Was Jesus born separated from the Father? Was He born devoid of the Holy Spirit? It would appear that Sequeira takes the position that, since Jesus *assumed* what had not been His by native right, it cannot be said that He was born alienated from the Father. He did indeed assume an alienated humanity, but He did this in order to bring about reconciliation between His Father and the alienated humanity. The union of divinity and humanity in the Person of Jesus began the reconciliation process. In Jesus, God and the fallen humanity were reconciled. In Jesus, spiritually dead humanity was brought back to spiritual life. This is how Sequeira (2009:46) puts it: 'God at the incarnation united the holy, immortal, divine nature of Christ to corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human nature. Thus humanity, though spiritually dead because of the Fall, was recalled to spiritual life in Christ (Ephesians 2:5; Titus 3:5)'.

Sequeira (1996:164) opines: 'That human nature which He assumed was not His by native right; He took it in order to redeem mankind. Had Christ, even by a thought, yielded to the sinful desires of the flesh, He would have become a guilty sinner like us'. He suggests: 'But as long as He did not unite his will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner' (Sequeira 1996:164).

In Sequeira's view, Jesus Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His birth. Therefore, it cannot be argued that He was alienated from the Father. As already noted, unity with the Father took place right at the incarnation. Thus, he asserts: 'Christ was also born of the Spirit from His very conception (see Luke 1:35). So, from the very beginning of His life on earth, Christ's mind, or soul, was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in His human spirit' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147).

In the same fallen human flesh that Jesus assumed, the Holy Spirit dwelt without measure. Jesus had two natures: He was both God and a human being. Therefore, it cannot be said that He was born alienated from the Father, although the human nature He took was our alienated human nature.

I need Sequeira to clarify what he means by saying that 'as long as He did not unite his will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner' (quoted above). Does He mean that Jesus did not unite His will or mind to our sinful nature at the incarnation? Does He mean that Jesus' will or mind did not give in to the desires of the sinful flesh that He assumed? I will consider these questions in the evaluation chapter.

As noted, Sequeira believes that the Bible records physical death, which, just like spiritual death, resulted from sin. I will now turn to this topic.

#### *7.4.6.1.2 Physical or the First Death*

According to Sequeira (2009:297), 'Scripture defines death as the cessation of life'. Physical death is the separation of the elements (dust and breath of life) which were used to bring a human being into existence. It is recorded in Scripture: 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being' (Gen. 2:7). The KJV puts it this way: 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'. According to Sequeira (2009:294), the primary meaning of the term 'soul' is 'the life principle with which we are born'. In Hebrew and Greek, this term is applied to both human beings and animals (Sequeira 2009:294). In this light, Sequeira



argues: 'In fact, the first time the word *soul* appears in Scripture it refers to animals created on the fifth day of Creation week "that hath life (Hebrew *soul*)" (Genesis 1:20, KJV)' (Sequeira 2009:294-295). He asserts: 'When God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, Adam became a living "soul" – a living being (Genesis 2:7)' (Sequeira 2009:295).

It is Sequeira's judgement that the popular belief of most Christians that every human being has an immortal soul is not biblically correct (Sequeira 2009:295). This is because 'the human life principle, or soul, created in Adam was only conditionally immortal' (Sequeira 2009:295). Immortality was dependent on living a life of obedience, and partaking of the tree of life (cf. Gen 2:17; 3:22-24): 'God made it clear that the day human beings ate the forbidden fruit, they would surely die (that is, the life principle, or soul, would become mortal, subject to death [Genesis 2:16, 17])' (Sequeira 2009:295). Thus, 'Adam's sin not only led to his death, but spread death to the entire human race (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22)' (Sequeira 2009:295).

Scripture reveals that God 'alone has immortality' (cf. 1 Tim 6:13-16). The implication of this, according to Sequeira (2009:295), is that anyone who is not God, is mortal: 'Immortality, or eternal life, is therefore a gift experienced only through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16)' (Sequeira 2009:295). Sequeira asserts that the idea that human beings possess immortality comes from Greek paganism that infiltrated quite early into the church (Sequeira 2009:295). He asserts that, after the apostles died, the Church Fathers of primarily Greek extraction assumed leadership, and the idea of an immortal soul took root in Christian theology (Sequeira 2009:295).

Sequeira (2009:294) opines that the popular belief that the human soul is immortal and leaves the body at death, bound either for the bliss of heaven or the tormenting fires of eternal hell, contradicts the truth of the gospel and paints a horrible picture of God. What Scripture teaches is that 'the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also, their love, their

hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun' (Eccl 9:5-6).

According to Sequeira (2009:296), there is a controversy on immortality among Protestant theologians. He notes that this controversy was ignited by Oscar Cullmann's book, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body?* (Cullmann 1958). In that book, Cullmann contrasted the death of the great Greek philosopher, Socrates, with that of Jesus. Because Socrates believed that the soul is immortal but imprisoned in an evil body, he believed death was something to celebrate. Thus, he held a banquet on his death bed. Sequeira (2009:296) adds: 'Christ, on the other hand, suffered severe mental anguish as He faced death in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44), for he faced the possibility of permanent death – a good-bye to life forever'.

The controversy that Cullmann's book produced among Protestant scholars, forced them to restudy the long-held belief that humans possess an immortal soul that leaves the body at death, and many scholars concluded that such an idea has no biblical support (cf. Sequeira 2009:296). In this light, an Evangelical scholar, Edward Fudge, decided to publish a book, *The Fire That Consumes* (Fudge 1982). In his book, he presents a biblical and historical study of the doctrine of final punishment. Inserted in the first edition of this book is a separate letter from the author to his fellow scholars. In part, the letter states:

Dear Colleagues: For 1500 years most Christians have assumed as true a doctrine which is nowhere to be found in the Word of God, sprang from explicitly pagan pre-suppositions, slanders the character of God and the blessed Trinity, prevailed in Protestantism for political not biblical reasons, and has been rejected by an increasing number of such faithful scholars as Graham Scroggy, John R.W. Stott, Phillip Hughes, F.F. Bruce, John Wareham, Dale Moody, and Pluck...Would you be as startled as I was to discover these facts from Scripture and church history? The Old Testament uses or utilizes some 50 Hebrew words and 75 figures of speech to describe the ultimate end of the wicked, and everyone sounds

exactly like total extinction. When our Lord taught on this subject, He generally used Old Testament language which most naturally describes complete disintegration of the entire person in the fire of the age to come. No passage of Scripture teaches the inherent or natural immortality of the soul, or of any other aspect of the human creature. The notion of everlasting torment appears explicitly in Christian literature for the first time in writings of the Apologists who expressly based it on the platonic assumption that the soul is immortal and cannot be destroyed (Fudge 1982, insert in *The Fire That Consumes*; cf. Sequeira 2009:296-297).

After this quotation, Sequeira (2009:297) asserts: 'God is surely moving the Protestant world in the right direction on this important subject'. He then suggests: 'As long as the Christian Church holds onto the idea that humans possess an immortal soul, it will continue to undermine the gospel and the true sacrifice of Jesus on the cross' (Sequeira 2009:297). This is because if humans 'possess an immortal soul, [then] death must be defined as the separation of the [immortal] soul from the body' (Sequeira 2009:297). And if humans possess an immortal soul, then Jesus assumed a humanity that had an immortal soul; implying that He did not really die on Calvary's cross. This insightful comment captures the gist of Sequeira's argument:

Furthermore, if man does possess an immortal soul, and if the wages of sin is eternal torture of the soul in the fires of hell (as most Christians believe), then Christ, who suffered the wages of sin for mankind, should be burning in hell today and must continue to do so for eternity. Otherwise, God is being unjust in letting Jesus' soul suffer in hell for only three days, while the unrighteous have to experience this torture throughout eternity! (Sequeira 2009:299).

According to Sequeira (2009:299), it must be emphasised that Scripture clearly teaches that when a person dies, that person no longer exists anywhere in any form. David, for instance, assumes: 'The dead do not praise the LORD, nor any who go down into silence'

(Ps 115:17). The 'gospel prophet', Isaiah of the OT, contrasts the dead with the living: 'For Sheol cannot thank you, Death cannot praise you; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your truth. The living, the living man, he shall praise you, as I do this day; the father shall make known your truth to the children' (Is 38:18, 19).

Physical death remains part of us for as long as there is still time to exist on this earth. This is because Jesus' death on the cross did not abolish this death. In this light, Sequeira (2009:297) opines: 'Since Christians still experience the first death (a state of unconscious "sleep"), the death Jesus abolished on the cross can only refer to the second death – the eternal death that is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23)'. Thus, Jesus did not die the first (physical) death, for had He died that death, Christians would not experience it.

In conclusion, for Sequeira, physical death is the separation of the body that came from the ground, and the breath of life, which God breathed into Adam's nostrils (cf. Gen 2:7). In death, 'the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it' (Eccl 12:7). The spirit that returns to God must refer to the breath of life, for God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils (Gen 2:7). A parallel text in Psalm 146:4 states: 'His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish'. In the KJV, we read: 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish'. The ESV agrees with the KJV: 'When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish'. Thus, in the OT, *spirit* is equated with *breath*. Physical death is referred to as resting in sleep in both the OT and NT. For instance, it is said that 'David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David' (1 Kin 2:10), and, 'For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption' (Acts 13:36). Jesus said: 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up' (John 11:11). It is clear in John 11:13 that Jesus spoke of Lazarus' death, and not just resting in sleep. When He realised that the disciples thought that He meant 'resting in sleep', He stated directly: 'Lazarus is dead' (John 11:14). This, in Sequeira's view, is what Scripture says about physical death. Scripture knows nothing about an immortal soul that leaves the body and goes either to enjoy the bliss of Paradise or go to hell. The popular belief that humans possess an

immortal soul negates the clear teaching of the gospel that Jesus destroyed eternal death, which I will now turn to.

#### 7.4.6.1.3 *Eternal or the Second Death*

According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:74), God has made it absolutely clear that ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Rom 6:23; cf. Gen 2:16, 17; Ezek 18:4, 20): ‘And this penalty of sin is not just death but *eternal* death’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:74). Eternal death is actually the second death – this is defined as ‘goodbye to life forever’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:74). ‘This’, in Sequeira’s view, ‘is the death that the lost will experience at the end of the millennium (see Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8)’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:74). The first or physical death already appears terrible, as it is not due to the wages of sin, but to its consequence. However, ‘all who die the first death will be resurrected – the saved to eternal life, and the lost to face the second death, the wages of sin...In the second death, God, the Source of all life, abandons the unrepentant to their own choice of unbelief, leaving them without any hope whatsoever’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:74-75). Sequeira ([1993] 1999:75) continues: ‘Christ’s death on the cross was “unto sin” (Romans 6:10)’. What this means, according to Sequeira, is that as our substitute and representative, Jesus Christ, experienced the ‘second death’ on the cross, the eternal death that the Bible describes as the ‘wages of sin’: ‘On the cross Jesus tasted this second death for everyone (Hebrews 2: 9)’ (Sequeira 2009:297). It was for this reason that Paul was able to conclude that Jesus ‘abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel’ (2 Tim 1:10). In Sequeira’s view, therefore, Jesus did not die the first death; instead, He died the second death. It is because Jesus died the second or eternal death that all genuine Christians will not experience it. Genuine Christians will not experience the second or eternal death because Jesus abolished it.

What is Sequeira’s main concern about the type of humanity that Jesus assumed, which is related to the death He died? His main concern is the aspect of how Jesus dealt with sin as a law that resides in the sinner’s flesh. In his view, Jesus had to assume a fallen human nature so that He may qualify to be our substitute and deal with the dual problem of sin. Sin as nature would be crucified and die eternally through Jesus’ death on the

cross. Sin as acts or behaviour would be laid on Him and He would bear them vicariously as He dies on the cross.

Sequeira (2005:137) argues: 'Two laws – or principles – met in the humanity of Jesus. These were the law of sin (which He assumed because He became one of us) and the law of the Spirit, which was His because He was born of the Spirit and was divine'. These laws fought against each other in Jesus. The law of the Spirit emerged victorious. Then Jesus died eternally on the cross, and the law of sin also died, for it was in Him. It is asserted: 'And the good news is that in Christ's humanity, the law of the Spirit of life defeated and overcame the law of sin and death – and finally condemned it on the cross' (Sequeira 1996:101). He elaborates on the phrase 'sin in the flesh' in Romans 8:3:

The phrase 'sin in the flesh' (NKJV) or 'sin in sinful man' (NIV), is synonymous with 'the law of sin and death' (verse 2) as well as with 'sin dwelling in me' (Romans 7:17, 20). The context clearly indicates that Christ condemned sin in the very same human nature that you and I possess – a human nature in which the 'law of sin' resides (Sequeira 1996:102).

The collective *bios*-type life dominated by the law of sin died eternally in Jesus, never to rise again. This is how Sequeira (2009:77) puts it: 'While Christ Himself was tasting the second death for everyone on the cross (Matthew 27:45, 46; Hebrews 2:9), the collective *bios*-type life of the human race was dying in Him, never to rise again (Romans 6:23)'; and 'It was then [some 2,000 years ago] – at the cross – that the human race was set free from the law of sin and death in Jesus Christ, through the law of the Spirit' (Sequeira 2005:137).

Thus, as was noted in the section dealing with the first or physical death, if human beings possess an immortal 'soul', then Jesus had an immortal 'soul', and if Jesus had an immortal 'soul', then He did not die eternally on the cross. If Jesus did not die eternally on the cross, then the law of sin residing in His flesh was not condemned; and if the law of sin residing in Jesus was not condemned, then fallen human beings in whom resides the

law of sin have not been freed from the law of sin and death. Thus, victory over the law of sin residing in our flesh is not possible. As a matter of fact, if Jesus did not die the second death because He had an immortal 'soul', He did not destroy the second death, and if He did not destroy the second death, then all human beings will experience the second death. The implication of this is that it was never God's plan to save fallen human beings. However, if Jesus died the second or eternal death, then fallen humans have the hope of living eternally with Him. They will then have the hope of overcoming sin in the flesh as they struggle with temptation. This victory comes to believers in Jesus as they identify themselves with His victory over sin in the flesh (Gal 2:20). When temptation comes and the flesh wants to have its desires fulfilled, then the Holy Spirit, through the will or the mind, tells the flesh: 'You died eternally in Christ'. Sequeira ([1993] 1999:86) asserts: 'Not only Christ died the second death on the cross; we, too, died in Him. Thus, He forever delivered us from our doomed situation in Adam'.

If Jesus died eternally and did not rise, then fallen human beings who have believed in Him are still in their sins, and if Jesus died and did not rise, then believers who have died, have perished. Therefore, in his Christology, Sequeira deals with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which I will now review.

#### **7.4.6.2 Resurrection**

As it has already been noted, Sequeira has the conviction that Jesus was qualified to become the sinner's substitute by assuming a fallen human nature. Qualified as He was by His unique conception to represent humankind, Jesus, the God-Man, then spent 33 years living a perfect human life (Sequeira 2009:46). This perfect obedience met the demand of God's law to be perfectly obeyed. However, Jesus also had to meet the demand of the law for the judgement of those who have broken it: 'On the cross, Christ met the demand of the law for judgment' (Sequeira 2009:47): 'He paid the full price for the sins of the human race (Galatians 3:13) and thereby redeemed it' (Sequeira 2009:47). This, however, was not enough: He had to rise from the grave to complete that part of God's plan of salvation for which He had willingly assumed a fallen humanity.

Sequeira (2009:47) asserts: 'After fully redeeming [humankind] in Christ on the cross, God raised His Son back to life'. This proved to the Jews who had rejected Jesus, that He was indeed the Son of God. Paul stated that Jesus was 'declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead' (Rom 1:4). In His birth, life, death, and resurrection, we have His complete history, which is called 'the everlasting gospel' (cf. Matt 24:14; Rev 14:6).

In which way is the resurrection of Jesus Christ necessary to our discussion of the type of humanity He assumed? Sequeira (2009:47) observes: 'In doing so [raising Jesus], He [God] also raised humanity in Him, totally cured from the effects of the Fall and the sin problem'. It must be remembered that, for Sequeira, Jesus assumed our corporate, condemned, sinful life (βίος). Therefore, it was this life in Jesus that God raised, totally cured from the effects of the fall and sin problem. Jesus was raised, and in raising Him, God raised the entire humanity. Sequeira explains: 'On the cross the corporate, condemned, sinful human life (βίος) died the second, or eternal death. It forever came to an end in Jesus. In exchange, God gave [humankind] the eternal life (ζωή) of His Son. This is God's supreme gift to [humankind] (1 John 5:11, 12)' (Sequeira 2009:47).

It was in this light that Paul related that Jesus 'has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Tim 1:10). For those who accept Him as Saviour and Lord, Paul said that 'if anyone is in Jesus, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new' (2 Cor 5:17); 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you' (Rom 8:11).

#### *7.4.6.2.1 Raised in Jesus and Jesus' Resurrection Body*

As already noted, in the resurrection of Jesus, the entire humanity was raised (Sequeira 2009:155). Sequeira asserts that 'at His resurrection God raised the entire human race, in Christ, with a new life, eternal and immortal' (Sequeira 2009:155). After Jesus rose from the grave, He ascended to heaven. In His ascension, the entire humanity ascended to heaven (cf. Eph 2:6). It is thus suggested that 'in Christ's ascension, God took



redeemed humanity to heaven in Christ and sat it in heavenly places in Him (Ephesians 2:6)' (Sequeira 2009:48).

The question that needs to be asked, is: What kind of body did Jesus take with Him to heaven? This is very important because the three scholars selected for this study hold conflicting views. In the opinion of Sequeira (2009:48), 'Christ took glorified a body to heaven, fully redeemed from the effects of sin, and all who accept Him by faith will receive the same'. He adds that 'having redeemed and cleansed our sinful humanity at the cross, Jesus rose from the dead with a glorified body, physically as well as morally' (Sequeira 1996:201), and, 'At His ascension, He took this redeemed body to heaven where it is reserved for us at the second coming' (Sequeira 1996:201).

What Sequeira seemingly argues, is that the fallen human nature that Jesus assumed was the one that, after it had obeyed, died on the cross. This fallen human nature was redeemed and cleansed, and afterwards it was glorified through the resurrection, so much so that the body Jesus took to heaven, was a glorified, immortal body. The fallen human nature that Jesus assumed was not His by native right – it was our nature by native right. Jesus only took it to redeem and cleanse it. In taking this nature, He pledged to retain it as part of His nature. Therefore, for endless ages, Jesus will always remain the God-Man. While on earth and before His resurrection, He was the God-fallen Human, but after His resurrection, He is the God-Glorified Human. The humanity that He assumed was totally redeemed and cleansed. Sequeira (2009:25) makes this insightful comment: 'Christ will retain His humanity throughout eternity'. This is probably the humanity in which He is portrayed in Revelation 1:12-14: 'Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire'.

## 7.5 Conclusion

This review of Sequeira's Christology has revealed that, in his view, Jesus assumed the nature of humanity, both spiritually and physically, as humanity is since sin affected it, except in *sinning*, and not as humanity was before it fell into sin. The human nature that Jesus assumed had the law of sin (tendency to sin) dwelling in it just as the rest of the human beings have it. However, while the rest of the human beings have allowed the tendency to sin to produce actual sin in thought, word, and action, Jesus did not give in to the desires of the fallen human nature He assumed. This is one area in which He was unique. Another area in which He was unique, was in the fact that He was both divine and human. He was also unique because He *became* what He had never been before. He *assumed*, or *took*, or *was made* a fallen human being. He was sent in the *likeness* of sinful flesh. He experienced temptation in the fallen human nature that He assumed, in the same way that other humans (born-again Christians) experience it. He struggled with the law of sin just as born-again Christians struggle with it.

Having joined the corporate fallen humanity He found, to His holy, divine life, Jesus obeyed God perfectly, thereby fulfilling the positive demands of God's law. Then He went to the cross where our many sins were laid on Him and He died eternally. The law of sin, which was in Him, also died eternally. This is the way that Jesus dealt with the dual problem of sin. He rose from the grave with a changed and glorified human nature in which the law of sin no longer dwells. With the glorified human nature, He ascended to heaven where He took His place at the right hand of God and ministers as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of the fallen humanity.

In Sequeira's Christology it is possible to believe that Jesus assumed the nature of a fallen humanity and still escape the trap of 'holy flesh' or perfectionism. Since He was tempted just as born-again fallen human beings are tempted, these human beings can take comfort in His success. Holy living is therefore possible. Jesus is not only our substitute, but He is also an example to born-again fallen human beings. Nevertheless, born-again fallen human beings do not overcome by imitating Jesus, but by maintaining a faith relationship with Him. Born-again Christians do not overcome as Jesus overcame,

but *in* or *through* Him. Therefore, holy living for born-again people is about an intimate relationship with Jesus who, in the fallen, sinful human nature, has chosen to live a holy life.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE PRELAPSARIAN VIEW AS TAUGHT BY MILLARD J. ERICKSON

#### 8.1 Introduction

In chapter 7, I reviewed Sequeira's view of Jesus Christ's humanity. In his theology, he moves from hamartiology to Christology with his major concern being soteriology. Because sin is both nature and an act, he formulates a Christology in which Jesus assumes a fallen, sinful human nature in order to totally deal with the dual sin problem. There is therefore a very close link between the humanity that Jesus assumed and the nature of the sin He came to deal with.

This chapter looks at Erickson's view of Jesus Christ's humanity. The aim of the chapter is to review his Christology in preparation of a contextual evaluation of his prelapsarian view in chapter 12. After giving a biographical sketch of Erickson, I will consider the concept of sin before reviewing his view of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

#### 8.2 Biographical Sketch

Millard J. Erickson was born on 24 June 1932 in Ishanti County, Minnesota. He is a Christian theologian, a professor of theology, and author. He has written the widely acclaimed 1312-page systematics work *Christian Theology* and more than 20 other books. Currently, he is Distinguished Professor of Theology at the Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. He was a professor of theology and academic dean at the Bethel University seminary for many years. He also taught at the Baylor University and earned a BA degree from the University of Minnesota, a BD from the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, an MA degree from the University of Chicago, and a PhD from the Northwestern University.

An ordained Baptist minister, Erickson is a fairly conservative evangelical and only moderately Calvinistic. He is accommodating of alternative views on a number of issues, but one of the most vocal opponents of the most liberal side of evangelicalism. He is also

a prominent critic of open theism and postmodern Christianity, including the Emerging Church movement.

His academic writing begins with his doctoral dissertation on the theology of Henry, Ramm, and Carnell, which he finished in 1963. He revised and published the dissertation under the title *The New Evangelical Theology* in 1968 (Erickson 1968). It is Erickson's *Christian Theology* (Erickson 2013) that forms the basis of my review of his view of Jesus Christ's humanity.

After this biographical sketch, I will proceed to look at how Erickson views sin. This is important because one's position on the nature of sin impacts on one's view of both the humanity and substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. In his view, the doctrine of sin is very important to us, since it affects and is affected by all other doctrines (Erickson 2013:513).

### **8.3 The Concept of Sin**

How does Erickson view sin? In my opinion, he treats the topic of sin quite exhaustively. In his *Christian Theology* (Erickson 2013), he devotes five quite lengthy chapters to the topic of sin under the headings, The Nature of Sin; The Source of Sin; The Results of Sin; The Magnitude of Sin; and The Social Dimension of Sin. I will in this review follow the pattern that Erickson follows in his treatment of the topic of sin.

#### **8.3.1 The Nature of Sin**

According to Erickson (2013:513), sin is any evil action or evil motive that is in opposition to God. He opines that 'sin is failure to let God be God and placing something in God's rightful place of supremacy' (Erickson 2013:513). Sin is an inner force, an inherent condition, a controlling power (Erickson 2013:513). It is a tendency before it is an act. In other words, before one sins, one is already a sinner in desperate need of a saviour.

Erickson has identified fifteen terms for sin in the Bible. There are terms emphasising causes of sin, and terms emphasising the character of sin. There are also terms

emphasising the results of sin. I will only consider these terms that are relevant to this study.

### **8.3.1.1 Terms Emphasising the Character of Sin**

The group of sins to be examined under this heading involves those that are so serious in character that it makes little difference why they occur, what prompts the individual to commit them (Erickson 2013:519). What is crucial is the nature of the deed.

#### *8.3.1.1.1 Missing the Mark*

The idea of missing the mark is probably the most common of those concepts that stress the nature of the sin (Erickson 2013:519). It is found in the Hebrew verb *חָטָא* and the Greek verb *ἁμαρτάνω*.

Smith (1953:69), whose concept of sin is shared by Erickson, reports that the Hebrew verb and its cognates appear about 600 times in the Bible and are translated in the Septuagint by 32 different Greek terms – the most common rendering by far being *ἁμαρτάνω* and its cognates.

It has been opined that the phrase ‘missing the mark’ usually suggests a mistake rather than a wilful, consciously chosen sin (Erickson 2013:520). Nevertheless, in the Bible, the Hebrew verb suggests not merely failure, but a decision to fail, a voluntary and culpable mistake (Smith 1953:16). The verb is used to refer to one’s actions in relationship both to other humans and to God, although the latter is much more common than the former (Erickson 2013:520). In ritualistic passages, there are a few instances where the noun form seems to refer to an unwitting sin. There it is often found in conjunction with the noun ‘unwittingly’, that is, ‘through ignorance’. It is translated as ‘sin’ or ‘sin offering’ (e.g. Lev 4-5). In Erickson’s opinion, the most common NT term, and the one closest to the Hebrew verb, is *ἁμαρτάνω* and its two noun forms, *ἁμαρτία* and *ἁμάρτημα* (Erickson 2013:520). He asserts that the conclusion is based upon two considerations: One being that *ἁμαρτάνω* is the term most frequently used in the Septuagint to render the Hebrew verb ‘to sin’, and the other consideration being that the basic meaning of the two terms is the

same. The verb ἀμαρτάνω originally meant 'to miss, miss the mark, lose, not share in something, be mistaken' (Günther 1978:577). The noun ἀμαρτία denotes the act itself, the failure to reach the goal, and ἀμάρτημα denotes the result of this act.

According to Erickson (2013:520), this word family constitutes the most prominent NT terms for sin. It is used far more frequently (there are almost 300 occurrences) than any other term. He asserts that, as in the Septuagint, the meaning in the NT is also 'to miss the mark', because one aims at the wrong target, emphasising what actually occurs rather than one's motivation for aiming wrong (Erickson 2013:520).

This sin, according to Erickson (2013:520), is always sin against God, since it is a failure to hit the mark He has set, His standard of perfect love and perfect obedience to Him. We miss this mark and sin against God when, for example, we fail to love others, since love of others would inevitably follow if we truly loved God. Similarly, sinning against one's own body is a mistreatment of God's temple (1 Cor 3:16-17) and therefore a sin against God (Erickson 2013:521).

At this point, it is important to emphasise that the idea of blameworthiness is clearly attached to missing the mark (Erickson 2013:521). Thus, whatever antecedents may have led to the act of sin, it is culpable behaviour. The fact that *καὶ* is often found in confessions, indicates that the sinner senses responsibility. There is a goal or purpose and the sinner has failed to achieve it (Erickson 2013:520). It has been contended that, despite protests by some scholars that this is a Greek way of thinking, the idea of blameworthiness being attached to missing the mark is found in both Testaments (Erickson 2013:521).

It may be necessary to also state that there was a development and refinement of the concept between the OT and the NT periods (Erickson 2013:521). Greek has not only the noun ἀμαρτία, the actual act of sinning, but also the noun ἀμάρτημα, the end result of sin. It has been argued that there is no equivalent distinction in Hebrew, perhaps because, as it was pointed out earlier, the act and the result were thought of as inseparable and even identical (Erickson 2013:521).

Erickson has identified transgression as another term that emphasises the character of sin. Thus, in what follows, I will review transgression as a term that emphasises the character of sin.

#### *8.3.1.1.2 Transgression*

Erickson (2013:522) found that the Hebrew noun, which literally means ‘to cross over’ or ‘to pass by’, appears approximately 600 times in the OT. Nearly all of the occurrences are in the literal sense. In a number of passages, however, the noun involves the idea of transgressing a command or going beyond an established limit (Erickson 2013:522). In Esther 3:3 it is used of an earthly king’s command. In most of the parallel cases, however, it is used of transgressing the Lord’s commands – a concrete example is found in Numbers 14:41-42. The people of Israel were not to transgress God’s covenant (Deut 17:2) or His commandment (Deut 26:13). Other examples include Jeremiah 34:18, Daniel 9:11, and Hosea 6:7 and 8:1.

Erickson (2013:523) contends that, while a number of Greek terms are used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term for transgression, the one closest in meaning is παραβαίνω (break) and its noun form παράβασις (transgression). Sometimes these terms refer to the transgression of a particular commandment, for example, Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit (Rom 5:14; 1 Tim 2:14) (Smith 1953:145). The terms always carry the implication that some law has been transgressed. Consequently, Paul argued: ‘And where there is no law there is no transgression’ (Rom 4:15).

The third term that Erickson suggests, emphasising the character of sin, is iniquity or a lack of integrity.

#### *8.3.1.1.3 Iniquity or Lack of Integrity*

According to Erickson (2013:523), the primary term under this heading suggests a deviation from the right course. Thus, the term can carry the idea of injustice, failure to fulfil the standard of righteousness, or a lack of integrity (Erickson 2013:523). In Erickson’s view, the idea of justice is evident in Leviticus 19:15: ‘You shall do no injustice



in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbour’.

### **8.3.2 The Source of Sin**

Erickson (2013:544) avers that, according to the Bible, the responsibility for sin lies squarely at the door of human beings, like in James 1:14-15 (NIV): ‘Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death’.

It should be noted that human beings are born sinful. They are born with a nature that already leans towards sin. As Paul has put it in Romans 7, human beings have natures, which cannot obey God without the power of the Holy Spirit. The devil uses our fallen natures to tempt us to commit sin.

### **8.3.3 The Results of Sin**

According to Erickson (2013:548), sin has very serious consequences when it comes to the relationship between the sinner and God. It results in divine disfavour, guilt, punishment, and death (Erickson 2013:548). Physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death flow from the consequences of sin (Erickson 2013:548). Sin also has consequences that affect the individual sinner, which include enslavement, flight from reality, denial of sin, self-deceit, insensitivity, self-centeredness, and restlessness (Erickson 2013:548). These effects on the sinner also have social implications in competition, inability to empathise, rejection of authority, and inability to love (Erickson 2013:548). Thus, it can be concluded that sin is a very serious matter to both God and humanity.

The results or consequences of sin need some further elaboration. I will therefore discuss these consequences separately.

### **8.3.3.1 Results Affecting the Relationship with God**

It has been asserted by Erickson (2013:550) that sin produced an immediate transformation in Adam and Eve's relationship with God. Because they had violated God's trust and command, they had placed themselves on the wrong side of God, and in effect became His enemies (Erickson 2013:550). It must be pointed out that it was not God who had changed or moved, but Adam and Eve. Under this heading, Erickson looks at divine disfavour, guilt, punishment, and death.

#### *8.3.3.1.1 Divine Disfavour*

According to many texts in the Bible, it is clear that God looks at sin and the sinner with disfavour (Erickson 2013:550): Hosea 9:15 refers to God who is hating Israel, while Jeremiah 12:8 expresses a similar sentiment. In Psalm 5:5 and 11:5, God is said to hate the wicked. Much more frequent are passages in which He is said to hate wickedness (e.g. Prov 6:16-17; Zech 8:17). It should be observed that the hate is not one-sided, therefore on only God's part, as the wicked are described as those who hate God (Ex 20:5; Deut 7:10) and, more commonly, as those who hate the righteous (Ps 18:40; 69:4; Prov 29:10). In the few passages where God is said to hate the wicked, it is apparent that they initiated the change in the relationship (cf. Ps 5:5; 11:5).

Perhaps anticipating a charge of viewing God as one who changes according to circumstances, Erickson (2013:550) argues:

That God looks with favour upon some and with disfavour or anger upon others, and that he is sometimes described as loving Israel and at other times as hating them, are not signs of change, inconsistency, or fickleness in God. His reaction to our every deed is determined by his unchanging nature. God has indicated quite clearly that he cannot and does not tolerate certain things. It is part of his holy nature to be categorically opposed to sinful actions. When we engage in such actions, we have moved into the sphere of God's disfavour.

A survey of the OT reveals that it frequently describes those who sin and violate God's law as enemies of God. Yet, only very rarely does the Bible speak of God as their enemy (Ex 23:22; Is 63:10; Lam 2:4-5) (Erickson 2013:550). In this regard, Smith (1953:43) comments: 'In the Old Testament, "enmity", like hatred, is rare with God, but common with man'.

While God is only rarely spoken of as hating the wicked, it is common for the OT to refer to Him as angry with them (Erickson 2013:551). Nevertheless, God's anger should not be thought of as uncontrolled fury or personal spitefulness, rather, it is more in the nature of righteous indignation (Erickson 2013:551). For example, God is said to be angry with Israel for having made and worshipped the golden calf (Ex 32:10-11).

Erickson (2013:552) observes that, in the NT there is a particular focus on the enmity and hatred of unbelievers and the world toward God and His people. To sin is to make oneself an enemy of God. In Romans 8:7 and Colossians 1:27 Paul described the mind that is set on the flesh as being 'hostile to God' or alienated from Him. In James 4:4 (NIV) it is said that 'friendship with the world means enmity against God'.

However, God is not the enemy of anyone, as He loves all and hates none. He loved enough to send His Son to die for us while we were yet sinners and at enmity with Him (John 3:16; Rom 5:8-10). While it is true that God is neither the enemy of sinners, nor does He hate them, it is also quite clear that He is angered by sin (Erickson 2013:552). The two nouns that express this most clearly are θυμός and ὀργή (anger; wrath) (Erickson 2013:552). In many cases these two nouns do not merely refer to God's present reaction to sin, but also suggest certain divine actions to come (Erickson 2013:552). Texts containing these nouns are John 3:36, Romans 1:18, 2:5, and 9:22. The picture in these passages is that God's wrath is a very real and present matter, but will not be fully revealed or manifested in action, until some later point (Erickson 2013:552).

It is evident from the foregoing that God looks with disfavour upon sin, indeed, that sin occasions anger or wrath or displeasure within Him. However, anger is not something

that God chooses to feel (Erickson 2013:552). His disapproval of sin is not an arbitrary matter, for His very nature is one of holiness which automatically rejects sin (Erickson 2013:552). It can be postulated that, in some sense, He is 'allergic to sin' (Erickson 2013:552). God's anger should not be thought of as being excessively emotional – it is not as if He is seething with anger and His temper is virtually surging out of control (Erickson 2013:552).

For the purposes of this study, it is important to ask whether Jesus Christ ever was in disfavour with the Father. In other words, did Jesus do anything that brought Him in disfavour with God? I believe that, in the quest for a model of Jesus' human nature, this question is very important.

Apart from divine disfavour, guilt is another result affecting the relationship between humans and God.

#### *8.3.3.1.2 Guilt*

According to Erickson (2013:553), guilt, from a biblical point of view, refers to the state of having violated God's intention for one and thus being liable to punishment. One is guilty and so liable to punishment because one has sinned against God. Sin in this case is the 'ugly, twisted, spoiled action that comes short of the perfect standard of what God intended' (Erickson 2013:553). Sin is a moral wrong, a deliberate violation of God's commands, and thus deserving of punishment (Erickson 2013:553). Sin as the wrong thing that one does, is contrasted with the right, that which conforms to the law's stipulations. The wrong is whatever departs from that standard in some way and therefore deserves to be punished (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1973:730).

It is necessary to look into the precise nature of the disruption that sin and guilt produce in the relationship between God and human beings. God has placed humans in charge of the creation and commanded them to rule over it (Gen 1:28). As the almighty and completely holy one, He has asked humans for their worship and obedience. Humans, however, have failed to do God's bidding, using God's wealth of creation for their own

purposes like embezzlers (Erickson 2013:554). Humans have failed to treat the highest of all beings with the necessary respect. We as humans are ungrateful for all that God has done for us and has given us (Rom 1:21). We have spurned His offer of friendship and love, and in the extreme case, the salvation accomplished through the death of God's own Son (Erickson 2013:554). These offenses are magnified by who God is: He is the Almighty Creator, infinitely above us (Erickson 2013:554). Since He has brought us into existence, He has an absolute claim upon us, while He Himself is under obligation to no one (Erickson 2013:554). The standard of behaviour He expects us to emulate, is His own holy perfection (Erickson 2013:554).

According to Erickson (2013:554), we must think of sin and guilt in metaphysical categories if we are to gain a conception of their immense effect on our relationship with God and indeed on the whole of the universe. God is the highest being and we are His creatures, therefore, a failure to fulfil His standards disrupts the whole economy of the universe (Erickson 2013:554). When the creature deprives the Creator of what is rightly His, the balance is upset, for God is not being honoured and obeyed (Erickson 2013:554). God would virtually cease to be God if such disruption were to go uncorrected – therefore, sin and the sinner deserve and even need to be punished (Erickson 2013:554).

In this study the concept of guilt is very important: Was Jesus Christ guilty of violating God's law? Did He inherit guilt from His mother? I will examine these questions in order to appreciate Erickson's model of Jesus' humanity.

Erickson suggests that, because humans are guilty of having violated God's standard of holiness, they deserve to be punished. I will therefore discuss his views on punishment.

#### *8.3.3.1.3 Punishment*

Liability to God's punishment, in the view of Erickson (2013:554), is another result of our sin. Although the idea of punishment being retributive is regarded as 'primitive, cruel, a mark of hostility and vindictiveness, which is singularly inappropriate in a God of love who

is a Father to His earthly children' (Ferré 1951:228), Erickson (2013:554-555) insists that there is a dimension of divine retribution in the Bible, particularly in the OT.

Erickson shares the view of Smith (1953:51) who categorically states: 'There is no doubt that in Hebrew thought punishment is retributive. The use of the death penalty is enough to show that'. Since one whose punishment was death could not have time to reform, it is clear that punishment in that regard was retributive and not rehabilitative. God had decreed that anyone who shed blood should also have his or her blood, shed (Gen 9:6). In the opinion of Erickson (2013:555), the idea of retribution is also seen quite clearly in the term which appears about 80 times in the OT and is translated as 'avenge, revenge, [and] take vengeance' (Erickson 2013:555). When applied to God who is not a private Person, but a public Person – the administrator of the law – 'retribution' is a better translation than 'vengeance' (Erickson 2013:555). Thus, in connection with God's punishment of sinners, we should view His act as being retributive.

It should be observed that the death penalty also had a deterrent effect, since those who saw what happened to the person being executed, could be deterred from committing similar offenses (Erickson 2013:555). It would appear that the stoning of Achan and his family (Josh 7) was partly retribution for what he had done, but also a means of dissuading others from a similar course of conduct (Erickson 2013:556). The deterrent purpose of punishment can be seen in texts like Deuteronomy 6:12-15, 8:11 and 19-20, Jeremiah 7:12-14, and Psalm 95:8-11. Erickson suggests that there is also a disciplinary effect of punishment in both the OT and the NT (Ps 107:10-16; 119:71; Heb 12:6) (Erickson 2013:556). In the OT there is even something of the idea of purification from sin through punishment (cf. e.g. Is 10:20-21).

Erickson (2013:556) talks about God giving punishment in both an indirect and direct way. Punishment may be administered indirectly, simply through God's immanent working in the physical and psychological laws that He has established in the world (Erickson 2013:556). Indirect punishment may be external, as, for instance, when sin violates the principles of health and hygiene and results in illness (Erickson 2013:556). Indirect

punishment may also take the form of external conflict as the case was in David's family experience after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had killed Uriah (2 Sam 12:10-12). The tragedies in David's life may have been natural consequences flowing automatically from his behaviour and basic human psychology (Erickson 2013:556). The crimes of David's sons may well have been the consequences either of the propensity of children to imitate their parents or of David's failure to discipline his sons, thinking that this would be hypocritical in view of his own past behaviour (Erickson 2013:556-557). Punishment may also be internal, where, for example, sin may lead automatically to an awful feeling of guilt, and a gnawing sense of responsibility (Erickson 2013:557).

According to Erickson (2013:557), some of the didactic passages of the Bible indicate that there is in some cases a virtual cause-and-effect relationship between sin and punishment. For example, in Galatians 6:7-8 Paul used the imagery of sowing and reaping to compare the results of sin and of righteousness. He implied that just as the crop follows from the nature of the seeds planted, so the punishment follows automatically from the sinful act (Erickson 2013:557).

Nevertheless, while God often works indirectly through the physical and psychological laws that He has established, this is not His only or even primary channel of punishment (Erickson 2013:557). Most common in Scripture are those cases where God, by a definite decision and direct act, metes out punishment (Erickson 2013:557). Thus, even where the punishment follows naturally from the act, it is not something impersonal, or a piece of misfortune (Erickson 2013:557). The correct way to look at it is that the law that governs these fixed patterns is an expression of God's will (Erickson 2013:557).

Erickson (2013:557) cautions that the Christian view that God punishes through the patterns that He has established, is to be distinguished from the Hindu and Buddhist concept of karma, according to which every act has certain consequences. In karma there is an inexorable connection between an act and its consequences, to such an extent that nothing (not even death) can break this connection, for the law of karma carries over into the next reincarnation (Erickson 2013:557). In the Christian view, the sin-punishment

sequence can be interrupted by repentance and confession of sins, with consequent forgiveness, while death brings a release from the temporal effects of sin (Erickson 2013:557).

For the purposes of this study, I wish to state that the idea of retributive punishment, which is of great concern to me, is the one based on future judgement and not the temporal that I have so far reviewed. Erickson observes that, although less frequently than in the OT, the idea of retributive justice is also found in the NT. In the NT, reference is more to future rather than temporal judgement (Erickson 2013:556). Thus, paraphrases of Deuteronomy 32:35 are found in both Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30, where the Lord states: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay'. In Romans, Paul's purpose was to deter believers from attempting to avenge wrongs done to them, for God is a God of justice, and wrongs will not go unpunished (Erickson 2013:556).

Punishment based on future judgement is what the Bible calls the 'wages of sin' (Rom 6:23), which is the second death (Rev 20:6, 14). This is the punishment that Erickson contrasts with temporal punishment. It is in the context of this punishment that I want to attempt to propose a Christology that I believe best represents what Scripture teaches. I want to critically evaluate Erickson's view of Jesus' humanity in light of what he teaches with respect to punishment. Did He do anything that deserved punishment? Did the idea of punishment influence Erickson in his formulation of his model of Jesus' humanity? Connected to the idea of punishment as a result of sin, is the idea of death, which will occupy my attention in what follows.

#### *8.3.3.1.4 Death*

In Erickson's view, the truth of death being a result or consequence of sin is first pointed out in God's statement, forbidding Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17) (Erickson 2013:557). It is also found in clear didactic form in Romans 6:23, where Paul's point seems to be that, like wages, death is a fitting return, a just recompense for what humans have done (Erickson 2013:557). The death that humans have deserved by having sinned against God, has three different



aspects: '(1) physical death, (2) spiritual death, and (3) eternal death' (Erickson 2013: 557).

*a) Physical death*

The mortality of all humans is an obvious empirical fact and a truth taught by Scripture (Erickson 2013:557). Scripture makes it clear that people are destined to die (physically) once, and to face judgement afterwards (Heb 9:27). According to Erickson, death is attributed by Paul to the original sin of Adam. He observes, however: 'Yet while death entered the world through Adam's sin, it spread to all humans because all sinned' (Erickson 2013:557).

Erickson (2013:558) argues that there are two views dealing with physical death: The Calvinistic view and the Pelagian view (Erickson 2013:557). The Calvinistic view is basically the negative position, that physical death entered with the curse (Berkhof 1953: 260). The Pelagian view, on the other hand, is that humans were created mortal, just as everything about us dies sooner or later, so it is and has always been with humans (Erickson 2013:558). In this view, the principle of death and decay is a part of the whole creation (Erickson 2013:558). Pelagians point out that, if the Calvinistic view is correct, then it was the serpent who was right and Yahweh was wrong in saying, '...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen 2:17), for Adam and Eve were not struck dead immediately upon committing their sin (Moody 1981:295). Physical death, in the Pelagian view, is a natural accompaniment of being human (Erickson 2013:558). The biblical references to death as a consequence of sin are understood as references to spiritual death, separation from God, rather than physical death (Erickson 2013:558).

Erickson (2013:558) admits that the problem is not as simple as it might at first appear. He argues that the assumption that mortality began with the fall, and that Romans 5:12 and similar NT references to death are to be understood as references to a physical death, may not be warranted (Erickson 2013:558). In his view, an obstacle to the idea that physical mortality is a result of sin, is the case of Jesus who did not sin Himself (Heb 4:15), He was not tainted by the corrupted nature of Adam, and yet He died (Erickson

2013:558). In other words, 'How could mortality have affected someone who, spiritually, stood where Adam and Eve did before the fall?' (Erickson 2013:558). Erickson suggests that this is an enigma. Then he asks: 'Is it possible somehow to slip between the horns of the dilemma created by these conflicting data?' (Erickson 2013:558).

Erickson (2013:558) argues that the physical death is linked to the fall in some clear way, where, for instance, Genesis 3:19 is seemingly not a statement of what is the case and has been the case from creation, but a pronouncement of a new situation. He sees some difficulty in separating the ideas of physical death and spiritual death in Paul's writings, particularly in 1 Corinthians 15, where 'Paul's theme is that physical death has been defeated through Christ's resurrection' (Erickson 2013:558): 'Humans still die, but death's finality has been removed. Paul attributes to sin the power that physical death possesses in the absence of resurrection' (Erickson 2013:558). Nevertheless, Erickson has the view that 'with Christ's overcoming of physical death, sin itself (and thus spiritual death) is defeated vv.55-56' (Erickson 2013:558). Erickson avers: 'Apart from Christ's resurrection from physical death, we would remain in our sins, that is, we would remain spiritually dead (v. 17)' (Erickson 2013:558). Erickson finds support for his view in a statement made by Berkhof (1953:258-259): 'The Bible does not know the distinction, so common among us, between a physical, a spiritual, and an eternal death; it has a synthetic view of death and regards it as separation from God'.

On 'the considerations that Adam and Eve died spiritually but not physically the moment or the day they sinned, and that even the sinless Jesus was capable of dying' (Erickson 2013:559), Erickson suggests the concept of conditional immortality as the state of Adam before the fall. Adam was not inherently able to live forever, but he did not need to die, for given the right conditions, he could have lived forever (Erickson 2013:558). This was probably the meaning of God's words when He decided to expel Adam and Eve from Eden and from the presence of the tree of life: 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and, live forever' (Gen 3:22). The impression is given in this text that Adam and Eve,

even after the fall, could have lived forever if they had eaten of the fruit of life (Erickson 2013:559). Erickson comments:

What happened at the time of their expulsion from Eden was that the humans, who formerly could have either lived forever or died, were now separated from those conditions that made eternal life possible, and thus it became inevitable that they would die. Previously they could die; now they *would* die. This also means that Jesus was born with a body that was subject to death. He had to eat to live; had he failed to eat he would have starved to death (Erickson 2013:559).

Erickson (2013:559) refers to other changes that came as a result of sin. He notes that in Eden the humans had bodies that presumably could become diseased; after the fall there were diseases for them to contract (Erickson 2013:559). He argues further: 'The curse, involving the coming of death to humankind, also included a whole host of ills that would lead to death. Paul has told us that someday this set of conditions will be removed, and the whole creation delivered from this "bondage to decay" (Rom. 8:18-23)' (Erickson 2013:559).

In summary, Erickson (2013:559) suggests that the potential of death was within creation from the beginning, but so was the potential of eternal life. Sin, in the case of Adam and each of us, means that death is no longer merely potential but actual (Erickson 2013:558).

Erickson (2013:559) clearly states that he has not attempted to define physical death, while at the same time he acknowledges that most older theologies define it as the separation of body and soul (Erickson 2013:559). He asserts, however, that the definition of these older theologies is not fully adequate for the reasons indicated in his treatment of the makeup of human nature (Erickson 2013:559). Even then, Erickson still finds something to say in terms of the definition of physical death: 'For the time being, we will think of it as the termination of human existence in the bodily or materialized state' (Erickson 2013:559).

In chapter 12, I will ask Erickson to clearly define physical death. I want him to clarify the death from which Jesus rose, for he seems to suggest that it was from a physical death. Interestingly, he suggests that it is in Jesus' overcoming of the physical death that both sin and spiritual death are defeated. The question could be: If Jesus overcame the physical death, then why do humans still die? And if the spiritual death has been defeated by the fact of Jesus overcoming the physical death, are humans now spiritually alive? If, as Erickson suggests, Jesus was not tainted by the corrupted nature of Adam, how did the law of heredity bypass Him? If Jesus spiritually stood where Adam and Eve did before they fell, how many natures did He have? I hope that these questions will be answered in this study. At this point I will proceed to review Erickson's view of spiritual death.

#### *b) Spiritual death*

In the view of Erickson (2013:559), spiritual death is both connected with physical death and distinguished from it. It is the separation of the entire person from God (Erickson 2013:559). Sin is a barrier to the relationship between God and humans, bringing them under God's judgement and condemnation (Erickson 2013:559). This is true, because God, as a perfectly holy being, cannot look upon sin or tolerate its presence (Erickson 2013:559).

Erickson (2013:560) suggests that the essence of spiritual death can be observed in the case of Adam and Eve, where 'for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen 2:17) did not mean that they would experience immediate physical death. It did mean, as earlier pointed out, that their mortality would become actual and not merely potential (Erickson 2013:560). It also meant a spiritual death, a separation between them and God, as sin results in an alienation from God (Erickson 2013:560). In Erickson's opinion, spiritual death is the wages of sin of which Paul spoke in Romans 6:23. He suggested that this is the objective aspect of spiritual death (Erickson 2013:560).

There is also the subjective aspect of spiritual death where the Bible frequently states that people apart from Jesus are dead in trespasses and sins (Erickson 2013:560). According to Erickson, this means, at least in part, that sensibility to spiritual matters and

the ability to act and respond spiritually to do good things, are absent or severely impaired (Erickson 2013:560). However, the newness of life that is now ours through Jesus' resurrection and symbolised in baptism (Rom 6:4), while not precluding physical death, means that sin no longer dominates us, for we possess a new spiritual sensitivity and vitality (cf. Erickson 2013:560).

A major question that I would like to ask Erickson in chapter 12 has to do with what God really meant when He talked about Adam dying on the day that he would eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Did He really mean that his potential mortality would become actual? Did He have a physical or eternal death in mind? Was a physical death really the issue, or was the issue a spiritual death, culminating into eternal death? What role did Jesus' intervention play? Was it a physical death that was postponed to the final judgement?

As already noted, Erickson does not only identify physical and spiritual deaths, he also suggests that sin brought about eternal death as well. Thus, in what follows, I will review his view of eternal death as a consequence of sin.

### *c) Eternal death*

It is Erickson's contention that eternal death is in a real sense the extension and finalisation of the spiritual death where those who come to physical death, spiritually dead, separated from God, will have that condition become permanent (Erickson 2013:560). He argues: 'As eternal death is both qualitatively different from our present life and unending, so eternal death is separation from God that is both qualitatively different from physical death and everlasting in extent' (Erickson 2013:560).

Erickson (2013:560) sees the concept of eternal life contrasted with eternal death in the final judgement parable (Matt 25:31-46). He notes that, in Revelation 20, John wrote of the 'second death' (Erickson 2013:560). In his view, the first death is a physical death, from which the resurrection gives us deliverance, but not exemption (Erickson 2013:560): 'Although all will eventually die the first death, the important question is whether in each

individual case the second death has been overcome' (Erickson 2013:560). The Bible makes it clear that anyone whose name is not found written in the book of life, will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev 20:15, 14). This is the permanent state of what the sinner chose in life (Erickson 2013:560). The good news is that those who have part in the first resurrection are called blessed and holy because the second death has no power over them (Rev 20:6). It should be pointed out that Erickson also deals with the aspect of the intermediate state.

*d) The intermediate state*

Erickson (2013:1077) states that the intermediate state refers to the condition of humans between their death and the resurrection. He notes that this doctrine is an issue that is both very significant and problematic (Erickson 2013:1011). He admits that there is a scarcity of biblical references to the intermediate state: The 'doctrine is not the subject of any extended discourse in the way in which the resurrection and the second coming are' (Erickson 2013:1077).

According to Erickson (2013:1079), 'there are several biblical references to personal, conscious existence between death and resurrection'. In his view, the most extended is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). He contends that, while it was not Jesus' primary intent in this passage to teach about the nature of the intermediate state, it is unlikely that He would mislead us on the subject (Erickson 2013:1079-1080). He finds the teaching of the intermediate state also in other texts such as Luke 23:43 and 46, and Acts 7:59. The 'spirit' that Jesus committed into His Father's hands (Luke 23:43), and that Stephen requested Jesus to receive (Acts 7:59) when they were dying is, according to Erickson, some disembodied entity that exists in some form.

It has been argued by Erickson (2013:1084) that Paul's anthropology allowed him to hold to both the future resurrection and a disembodied survival. He relates that there are at least three points that suggest the intermediate state of the condition of an individual between death and the resurrection. The first point is based on Joachim Jeremias' distinction between Gehenna and Hades (Erickson 2013:1084). Jeremias (1964-1976:

657-658) suggests that Hades receives the unrighteous for the period between death and resurrection, whereas Gehenna is the place of punishment assigned permanently at the last judgement, and whose torment is eternal (Mark 9:43, 48). It is further suggested that the souls of the ungodly are outside the body in Hades, whereas in Gehenna both body and soul, reunited at the resurrection, are destroyed by eternal fire (Mark 9:43-48; Matt 10:28). Jeremias (1964-1976:657-658) asserts that this is counter to the view of some of the early Church Fathers that all who die – righteous and unrighteous alike – descend to Sheol or Hades, a sort of gloomy, dreamy state where they await the coming of the Messiah.

The second point made by Erickson (2013:1085) is that there are biblical indications that the righteous dead do not descend to Hades (Matt 16:18-19; Acts 2:31 [quoting Ps 16:10]): The righteous, or at least their souls, are rather received in paradise (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43).

Third, Paul equated being absent from the body with being present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:1-10; Phil 1:19-26). This, in Erickson's view, suggests an individual's intermediate state between death and the resurrection (Erickson 2013:1085).

Erickson (2013:1085) postulates: 'On the basis of these biblical considerations, we conclude that upon death believers go immediately to a place and condition of blessedness, and unbelievers enter an experience of misery, torment, and punishment'. He adds: 'Although the evidence is not clear, it is likely that these are the very places to which believers and unbelievers will go after the great judgment, since the presence of the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23) would seem to be nothing other than heaven' (Erickson 2013:1085). And yet, 'while the place of the intermediate and final states may be the same, the experiences of paradise and Hades are doubtlessly not as intense as what will ultimately be, since the person is in a somewhat incomplete condition' (Erickson 2013:1085).

It is Erickson's contention that the human being is capable of existing in either a materialised (bodily) or immaterialised condition (Erickson 2013:1085). He argues that these two conditions may be thought of in terms of a dualism in which the soul or spirit can exist independently of the body and asserts; 'Like a chemical compound, the body-soul, so to speak, can be broken down under certain conditions (specifically at death), but otherwise is a definite unity' (Erickson 2013:1085). Another way is to think in terms of different states of being, where 'just like matter and energy, the materialized and immaterialized conditions of the human are interconvertible' (Erickson 2013:1085). In Erickson's view, both of these analogies are feasible. He observes that Helm (1978:15-26), Purtill (1975:3-22), and other scholars have formulated conceptions of disembodied survival that are neither self-contradictory nor absurd. Thus, in his view, 'the disembodied intermediate state set forth by the biblical teaching is philosophically tenable' (Erickson 2013:1085).

A few questions can also be asked to Erickson, which will form the basis for my evaluation of his position regarding the humanity of Jesus: What really does the resurrection deliver us from, the first death or the second death? In other words, which death did Jesus die, the first or the second? Does the Bible really teach that there is an intermediate state after death? If it does, do people really die? When Jesus died, did He enter an intermediate state? How does this belief affect the doctrine of substitutionary atonement?

To sum up, I have reviewed Erickson's views of the effect of sin on the relationship between humans and God, which include divine disfavour, punishment, guilt, and death. In what follows, I will review his views of the effects of sin on the sinner.

### **8.3.3.2 Effects of Sin on the Sinner**

Erickson suggests seven effects of sin on the sinner, namely enslavement, flight from reality, denial of sin, self-deceit, insensitivity, self-centredness, and restlessness. I will briefly review each one of them.



#### *8.3.3.2.1 Enslavement*

By enslavement of sin, Erickson (2013:561) conveys that sin becomes a habit, or even an addiction, where one sin leads to another sin. After one has sinned, one may feel it is necessary to cover the sin by committing yet another sin. And sometimes a larger sin may be required to cover a smaller one. When Cain killed Abel, he lied about his whereabouts (Gen 4:8, 9). The lie was told to cover the murder of his brother. After committing adultery with Bathsheba and upon the discovery that she had conceived, David found it necessary to commit murder to conceal what he had done (2 Sam 11:1-12:15). Sometimes the pattern becomes fixed, so that the same act is repeated in virtually the same way. Another example is Abraham who lied about his wife to Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20) and repeated the same lie to Abimelech (Gen 20). It appears that he had not learned anything from the first incident. Interestingly, even his son, Isaac, later repeated the same lie with regard to his wife, Rebekah (Gen 26:6-11).

According to Erickson (2013:561), what some people consider a freedom to sin, a freedom from the restriction of obedience to the will of God, is actually the enslavement that sin produces. There are instances where sin gains so much control and power over a person that they cannot escape (Erickson 2013:561). Paul, for one, referred to Roman Christians who 'were slaves to sin' (Rom 6:17). Jesus states that 'whoever commits sin is a slave of sin' (John 8:34). However, the grip that sin had on the individual is taken away by the work of Jesus: 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ has made me free from the law of sin and death' (Rom 8:2). Apart from enslavement, Erickson observes that sin causes humans to run away from reality.

#### *8.3.3.2.2 Flight from Reality*

A flight from reality is actually an unwillingness to face reality (Erickson 2013:561). The harsh dimensions of life and especially the consequences of our sin, are not faced realistically – in particular, the stark fact of death (Heb 9:27). Erickson asserts that one way people avoid the stark reality of death is the use of positive language where people simply 'pass away' – death is made to sound like a pleasant little trip (Erickson 2013:561). There are no cemeteries or graves in our modern society, but 'memorial parks...And the

experience of growing old, which signals the approach of death, is carefully masked with euphemisms like “senior citizen” and “golden age”, even “chronologically gifted” (Erickson 2013:561). Erickson relates: ‘This disguising or ignoring of death sometimes constitutes a virtual denial, which actually is a sign of fear of death. A suppressed realization that death is the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23) may underlie many of our attempts to avoid thinking about it’ (Erickson 2013:561-562).

Accompanying the denial of reality, especially the reality of death, is a denial of sin, which is actually the source of death itself.

#### *8.3.3.2.3 Denial of Sin*

Sometimes people deny the reality of sin by relabelling it, so that it is not acknowledged as sin at all (Erickson 2013:562). Sin ‘may be considered a matter of sickness, deprivation, ignorance, or perhaps social maladjustment at worst’ (Erickson 2013:562). Denying the existence of sin is one way of disposing of the painful consciousness of one’s wrongdoing (Erickson 2013:562).

It is Erickson’s contention that another way of denying our sin is to admit the wrongness of our actions, but a decline to take responsibility (Erickson’s 2013:562). This dynamic can clearly be seen in the first people, Adam and Eve, who sinned and instead of taking responsibility, started the blame game (Gen 3:9-13). Although someone else had instigated the respective sins of Eve and Adam, it did not remove their responsibility, as the Bible clearly indicates.

According to Erickson (2013:562), the attempt to shift responsibility from oneself is a common practice, for deep down there is often a sense of guilt that one desperately wants to eradicate. It should be noted, however, that trying to shift responsibility, compounds the sin and makes repentance more unlikely (Erickson 2013:562). People make excuses and explanations for their actions, but all these are signs of the depth of sin. Thus, appealing to determinism to explain and justify our sin is simply a sophisticated form of denial (Erickson 2013:562). And when we deny sin, we enter into self-deceit.

#### *8.3.3.2.4 Self-deceit*

It was Jeremiah who wrote: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know [understand] it?' (Jer 17:9). Erickson (2013:562) translates 'deceitful' as 'slippery' or 'crooked'. He suggests that the hypocrites of whom Jesus often spoke probably fooled themselves before they tried to fool others (Erickson 2013:562). That was why He pointed to the ludicrous lengths to which self-deceit can go: 'And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?' (Matt 7:3) Thus, a self-deceived person thinks that they have not sinned while in fact they have sinned. However, that self-deceived person will magnify the sins of others. In self-deception, David denounced the injustice of the rich man in Nathan's parable who took the poor man's one little ewe lamb, but he did not see the point of the parable (his own injustice in taking Uriah's wife) until Nathan pointed it out to him (2 Sam 12:1-15). Self-deceived people become insensitive to sin.

#### *8.3.3.2.5 Insensitivity*

As a person continues to sin and reject God's warnings and condemnations, they become less and less responsive to the promptings of their conscience and the stirrings by the Word and the Spirit (Erickson 2013:563). As time goes on, even gross sins can be committed with no compunction, because a 'shell, a spiritual callous, as it were, grows upon the soul' (Erickson 2013:563). Paul spoke of those whose consciences have been seared (1 Tim 4:2) and those whose minds are darkened as a result of rejecting the truth (Rom 1:21). Perhaps the clearest example in Jesus' ministry is the Pharisees, who, having seen Jesus' miracles and heard his teaching, attributed what was the work of the Holy Spirit to Beelzebub, the prince of the demons (Matt 12:24) (cf. Erickson 2013:563).

A self-deceived person does not only become insensitive, he/she becomes self-centred as well.

#### *8.3.3.2.6 Self-centredness*

There is no doubt that an increasing self-centredness also results from sin, for before sin entered this world, humans were selfless (Erickson 2013:563). In many ways sin is a

turning in upon oneself that is confirmed with practice (Erickson 2013:563). Self-centredness will be clearly seen in our attempts to call attention to ourselves, to our supposed good qualities and accomplishments, and in our minimisation of our shortcomings (Erickson 2013:563). Self-centred people seek special favours and opportunities in life, wanting an extra little edge that no one else has. It is not uncommon for self-centred people to display a certain special alertness to their own wants and needs, while they ignore those of others (Erickson 2013:563).

On the list of the effects of sin on the sinner is also restlessness, which can empirically be observed in humans.

#### *8.3.3.2.7 Restlessness*

According to Erickson (2013:563), there is a certain insatiable character about sin whereby complete satisfaction never occurs. It is possible that some sinners may have a relative stability for a time, but sin eventually loses its ability to satisfy. It is just like habituation to a drug: A tolerance is built up and it becomes easier to sin without feeling pangs of guilt (Erickson 2013:563). It should be noted that after some time it takes a greater dosage to produce the same effects, therefore, our wants keep expanding as rapidly as, or more rapidly than, we can fulfil them (Erickson 2013:563). Erickson relates that, in answering the question, 'How much money does it take to satisfy a man?', John D. Rockefeller responded: 'Just a little bit more'. Probably many other people would respond the same way. The sinner is therefore like a restless, tossing sea: The wicked people never really come to peace. They are always trying to find satisfaction in the things of this world, but since God never intended that satisfaction should ever be obtained that way, sinners never find it.

Sin does not only have an effect on our relationship with God and on us, it also affects our relationship with other humans. A review of Erickson's view of how sin affects our relationship with other people is not relevant to this study. I will thus now proceed to review his view of the magnitude of sin.

### **8.3.4 The Magnitude of Sin**

According to Erickson (2013:565), it is evident from both the OT and the NT description of sin that it is universal. Both Testaments further affirm the depth and breadth of sin in all humans (cf. Erickson 2013:564). Erickson suggests that he presents a contemporary understanding of the magnitude of sin that incorporates a biblical perspective and the best elements of traditional views (Erickson 2013:565).

#### **8.3.4.1 The Intensiveness of Sin**

When Erickson speaks of the intensiveness of sin, he is actually concerned about how sinful the sinner is. In other words, he is dealing with the aspect of how deep the sin problem is. I will now review his views of the intensiveness of sin based on what the OT and NT are saying. Then I will review his views based on the concept of original sin.

##### *8.3.4.1.1 The OT Teaching*

Erickson (2013:569) argues that the OT for the most part speaks of sins rather than of sinfulness, and of sin as an act rather than as a state or disposition. He notes that the condemnation pronounced by the prophets was generally directed at acts of sin or sins, yet these were not merely external acts of sin, but inward sins as well, with a distinction drawn between sins on the basis of the motivation involved (Erickson 2013:569). For example, the right of sanctuary for someone who killed a person was reserved for those who had killed accidentally rather than intentionally (Deut 4:42). The motive was fully as important as the act itself (Erickson 2013:569). Additionally, inward thoughts and intentions were condemned quite apart from external acts. An example is the sin of covetousness, an internal desire that is deliberately chosen (cf. Smith 1953:34).

According to Erickson (2013:570), there is a further step in the OT understanding of sin, particularly in the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah where sin is depicted as a spiritual sickness that affects the heart. Thus, our heart is wrong and must be changed, or even exchanged. We do not merely do evil; our very inclination is evil (Erickson 2013:570). In this light, Jeremiah says: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' (Jer 17:9). For this reason, Jeremiah later stated that the Lord would

change the hearts of His people and write His law in them (Jer 31:31). Similarly, in the book of Ezekiel, God asserts that the hearts of the people need to change: 'Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh' (Ezek 11:19).

It is noteworthy that while some of the Hebrew terms for sin point to definite and specific sins, others seem to suggest a condition, state, or tendency of the heart (Erickson 2013:570). The verb which is particularly significant in this regard, in its various forms appears some 180 times in the OT (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1955:362-363). While there are more than 20 different renderings of the verb in English, the basic meaning is 'to plan', which combines the ideas of thinking and devising (Erickson 2013:570). It is Erickson's assertion that the term is used in connection with God's thoughts and purposes, and especially in connection with the cunning and sinful devising of a human heart (Erickson 2013:570). In the latter case, the verb calls attention not to the act of sin, but the purpose and even the scheming behind it (Erickson 2013:570). It is important to note that the image of the scheming heart is found as early as the account of the flood. God observed of sinful humanity that 'every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually' (Gen 6:5). Later examples are abundant: 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon' (Is 55:7); 'I did not know that they had devised schemes against me' (Jer 11:19); and 'The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but the words of the pure are pleasant' (Prov 15:26). Smith's comment on these passages is: 'Here the idea of separate inward sins is passing into that of a habit of sin' (Smith 1953:36).

According to Erickson (2013:570), the idea of sinfulness or a sinful nature is best expressed in Psalm 51, which is David's great penitential psalm. In this text, there is a strong emphasis on the idea of sin as an inward condition or disposition and the need of purging the inward person (Erickson 2013:570). The psalmist speaks of his having been sinful from not just birth, but conception (Ps 51:5). He speaks of the Lord's desiring truth in his inward parts, and the need of being taught wisdom in the secret heart (Ps 51:6).

David prays to be washed and cleansed (Ps 51:2, 7) and begs God to create in him a clean heart and to put a new and right (or steadfast) spirit within him (Ps 51:10). It is thus concluded: 'It is clear that the psalmist does not think of himself merely as one who commits sins, but as a sinful person' (Erickson 2013:570).

In conclusion it can be said that Erickson sees in the OT a depiction of sin not just as acts, but also as an inward condition, a disposition, or a tendency. One is not merely a sinner because of committing sins, but also because that is the natural condition of everyone who has ever been born in this world since our first parents fell from the standard of holiness. It is important to take note of Erickson's understanding of sin because, in formulating a position on the humanity of Jesus, he probably does so from the perspective of the nature and extent of sin. The extent of sin as portrayed in the NT is similar to the OT portrayal, but in the NT, it is clearer and more emphatic (Erickson 2013:571).

#### *8.3.4.1.2 The NT Teaching*

Referring to the inward disposition of sin, Jesus suggests that it is insufficient not to commit murder: One who is angry with a brother is already liable to judgement (Matt 5:21-22). It is also not enough to abstain from committing adultery: If a man lusts after a woman, he has in his heart already committed adultery with her (Matt 5:27-28) (Erickson 2013:571). Jesus put it even more strongly in Matthew 12:33-35, where actions are regarded as being issued from the heart. Luke made it clear that the fruit produced, reflects the very nature of the tree – of the person: no good tree bears bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit (Luke 6:43-45). Evil actions and words stem from the evil thoughts of the heart (Matt 15:18-19).

In Erickson's view, Paul's own self-testimony also was a powerful argument that it is the corruption of human nature that produces individual sins (Erickson's 2013:43). Paul recalled that 'when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death' (Rom 7:5). He then added: 'I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into

captivity to the law of sin which is in my members' (Rom 7:23). In Galatians 5:17 he referred to the desires of the flesh which are against the Spirit. The verb used here is ἐπιθυμέω, which can refer to either a neutral or improper desire (Erickson 2013:571). There are numerous 'acts of the flesh' listed in Galatians 5:19-21. Thus, 'In Paul's thinking, then, as in Jesus', sins are the result of human nature. In every human being there is a strong inclination toward evil, an inclination with definite effects' (Erickson 2013:571).

Erickson delves into the concept of 'total depravity'. In his view, the adjective 'total' is often attached to the idea of depravity (Erickson 2013:571). He observes that the idea is present in texts like Genesis 6:5, where the inclination of the human heart is evil all the time. In the NT there are texts such as Ephesians 4:18-19, Romans 1:18-32, Titus 1:15, and 2 Timothy 3:2-5 which focus on corruption and callousness and desperate wickedness of humans (Erickson 2013:572). Erickson cautions that the expression 'total depravity' must be carefully used. This is because it has sometimes been interpreted as conveying a false understanding of the human nature (Erickson 2013:572). This point is verified by Strong (1907:637-638) and Berkhof (1953:246).

What is total depravity? It conveys the idea that sin is a matter of the entire person (Berkhof 1953:247): The body is involved (Rom 6:6, 12; 7:24; 8:10, 13), the mind or reason is involved (Rom 1:21; 1 Cor 3:14-15; 4:4), and the emotions are also involved (Rom 1:26-27; Gal 5:24; 2 Tim 3:2-4) (cf. Erickson 2013:572). Erickson suggests that even the will is affected by sin: The unregenerate person does not have a truly free will, but is a slave to sin (Erickson 2013:572).

Further, total depravity means that even the unregenerate person's altruism always contains an element of improper motive (Erickson 2013:572). The good acts are not done entirely or even primarily out of a perfect love for God, that is, in each case there is another factor or reason, whether the preference of one's own self-interest or some other object less than God (Erickson 2013:573). It may sometimes be difficult to think of non-Christian people who do good deeds as being sinful and in need of regeneration, but the truth is



that even the likable and kind person is in need of the gospel of a new life, as much as is any obnoxious, crude, and thoughtless person (Erickson 2013:574).

The last point that can be stated about total depravity is that it means that sinners are completely unable to extricate themselves from their sinful condition (Strong 1907:640-646). Apart from the good acts that sinners do, being tainted by less than perfect love for God, good and lawful actions cannot be maintained consistently. The sinner cannot alter their life by a process of determination, will power, and reformation (Erickson 2013:574). Texts like Ephesians 2:1-5 and Colossians 2:13 testify to this fact. The author of the letter to the Hebrews spoke of acts that lead to death (Heb 6:1; 9:14). However, these various expressions do not mean that sinners are absolutely insensitive and unresponsive to spiritual stimuli, but rather that they are unable to do what they ought to. Unregenerate persons are incapable of genuinely good, redeeming works. Whatever they do is dead or ineffective in relationship to God (Erickson 2013:574). Thus, salvation by works is absolutely impossible (Eph 2:8-9).

I will now review Erickson's view of the concept of what theologians call 'original sin'.

#### **8.3.4.2 Original Sin: A Biblical and Contemporary Model**

Erickson (2013:579) declares that the key passage for constructing a biblical and contemporary model of original sin is Romans 5:12-19, where Paul was arguing that death is the consequence of sin. Commenting on verse 12, he states: 'Whatever the exact meaning of these words is, Paul certainly is saying that death originated in the human race because of Adam's sin. He is also saying that death is universal and the cause of this is the universal sin of humankind' (Erickson 2013:579).

Erickson argues that it is problematic to relate the statements that the universality of death came through the sin of Adam (Rom 5:15, 17) to the statement that it came through the sin of all human beings (Rom 5:12) (Erickson 2013:579). To solve this problem, he suggests that we have to consider a way of understanding the final clause in verse 12 that makes sense out of verses 15 and 17 (Erickson 2013:580). He argues that the verb

form ἥμαρτον is a simple aorist, which most commonly refers to a single past action (Erickson 2013:580). If Paul had intended to refer explicitly to a continued process of sin, both the present and imperfect tenses were available to him. Therefore, his choice of the aorist should be taken at face value (Erickson 2013:580). If we regard the sin of all human beings and the sin of Adam as the same, the problem of reconciling Romans 5:12 and 5:15 and 17 becomes considerably less complex, indicating that there is no conflict between these verses. As argued by Erickson, the potential problem presented by verse 14 where 'death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam', is resolved, for it is not an imitation or repetition of Adam's sin, but a participation in it, that counts (Erickson 2013:580).

How can the final clause in Romans 5:12 then be interpreted? Erickson (2013:580) postulates: 'The final clause in verse 12 tells us that we were involved in some way in Adam's sin; it was in some sense also our sin', but in what way were we involved in Adam's sin? According to Erickson, on one hand, it may be understood in terms of a federal headship where Adam acted on behalf of all people on the basis of a sort of contract between God and Adam as our representative, so that what Adam did, binds us (Erickson 2013:580). However, he seems to support the view of our involvement in Adam's sin based on the idea of natural headship where there is a special creation of the entirety of human nature as he asserts:

These and other considerations support the position that the entirety of our human nature, both physical and spiritual, material and immaterial, has been received from our parents and more distant ancestors by way of descent from the first pair of humans. On that basis, we were actually present within Adam, so that we all sinned in his act. There is no injustice, then, to our condemnation and death as a result of original sin (Erickson 2013:580).

Even with this assertion, Erickson detects another problem: The condition of infants and children. He notes that if the preceding reasoning is correct, then everybody begins life

with both a corrupted nature and the inherited guilt that are the consequences of sin (Erickson 2013:580-581). This would then imply that children who die before making a conscious decision to receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness, are lost and condemned to eternal death. Interestingly, however, he observes: 'While the status of infants and those who never reach moral competence is a difficult question, it appears that our Lord did not regard them as under condemnation' (Erickson 2013:581). He finds support for this in Matthew 18:3 and 19:14, as well as in 2 Samuel 12:23, Deuteronomy 1:39, Isaiah 7:15 and 16, and Jonah 4:11. Commenting on Deuteronomy 1:39, he says: 'Even with the Hebrew idea of corporate personality and corporate responsibility, these children were not held responsible for the sins of Israel' (Erickson 2013:581). His overall statement on these passages summarises his belief: 'Underlying these statements is the apparent fact that prior to a certain point in life, there is no moral responsibility, because there is no awareness of right and wrong' (Erickson 2013:581).

It is important at this point to state the summary of Erickson's view of original sin:

To summarize the major tenets of the doctrine [of original sin] as we have outlined it: we have argued that the Bible, particularly in the writings of Paul, maintains that because of Adam's sin all persons receive a corrupted nature and are guilty in God's sight as well. We have, further, espoused the Augustinian view (natural headship) of the imputation of original sin. We were all present in undifferentiated form in the person of Adam, who along with Eve was the entire human race. Thus, it was not merely [as an individual person] but humans who sinned. We were involved, although not personally, and are responsible for the sin. In addition, we have argued that the biblical teaching is that children are not under God's condemnation for this sin, at least not until attaining an age of responsibility in moral and spiritual matters (Erickson 2013:581).

To this summary Erickson (2013:581) adds: 'We must now ask whether the doctrine of original sin can be conceived of and expressed in a way that will somehow do justice to all these factors'. He suggests that this can be done by considering the parallelism that Paul drew in Romans 5 between Adam and Jesus, which is similarly found in 1 Corinthians 15:22: 'For as in Adam all die, even so all shall be made alive'. Paul asserted that in some parallel way, what each of them did, has its influence on us (as Adam's sin leads to death, so Jesus' act of righteousness leads to life) (Erickson 2013:581-582).

Erickson explains the parallel as follows: 'If the condemnation and guilt of Adam are imputed to us without there being on our part any sort of conscious choice of his act, the same would necessarily hold true of the imputation of Christ's righteousness and redeeming work' (Erickson 2013:582). Some questions can be asked: Does Jesus' death justify us simply by virtue of His identification with humanity through the incarnation and independently of whether we make a conscious and personal acceptance of His work? Do all humans have the grace of Jesus imputed to them, just as all have Adam's sin imputed to them? According to Erickson, the usual answer of evangelicals is 'no', for there is abundant evidence that there are two classes of people – the lost and the saved – and that only a decision to accept the work of Jesus makes it effective in our lives (Erickson 2013:582). Nevertheless, he asks some very pertinent questions himself and makes some important observations:

But if this is the case, then would not the imputation of guilt based upon the action of Adam, albeit Adam as including us, require some sort of volitional choice as well? If there is no 'unconscious faith', can there be 'unconscious sin'? And what are we to say of infants who die? Despite having participated in that first sin, they are somehow accepted and saved. Although they have made no conscious choice of Christ's work (or of Adam's sin for that matter), the spiritual effects of the curse are negated in their case (Erickson 2013:582).

He alleges that, while some theologies preserve the parallelism by allowing both an unconscious and unconditional imputation of Adam's guilt and Jesus' righteousness, another available alternative seems preferable (Erickson 2013:582):

The current form of my understanding is as follows: We all were involved in Adam's sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilt and condemnation that attach to his sin. With this matter of guilt, however, just as with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt. Thus, there is no condemnation until one reaches the age of responsibility. If a child dies before becoming capable of making genuine moral decisions, the contingent imputation of Adamic sin does not become actual, and the child will experience the same type of future existence with the Lord as will those who have reached the age of moral responsibility and had their sins forgiven as a result of accepting the offer of salvation based on Christ's atoning death. The problem of the corrupted nature of such persons is presumably dealt with in the way the imperfectly sanctified nature of believers will be glorified (Erickson 2013:582).

According to him, the nature of the voluntary decision that ends our childish innocence and which preserves the parallelism between our accepting the work of Jesus and that of Adam, and at the same time more clearly points out our responsibility for the first sin, is that we become responsible and guilty when we accept or approve of our corrupt nature (Erickson 2013:582). He adds:

There is a time in the life of each one of us when we become aware of our own tendency toward sin. At that point we may abhor the sinful nature that has been there all the time. We would in that case repent of it and might even, if there is an awareness of the gospel, ask God for forgiveness and cleansing. At the very least there

would be rejection of our sinful makeup. But if we acquiesce in that sinful nature, we are in effect saying that it is good. By placing our tacit approval upon the corruption, we are also approving or concurring in the action in the garden of Eden so long ago. We become guilty of that sin without having committed any sin of our own (Erickson 2013:583).

Erickson asserts that the view he advocates 'is preferable because of its greater simplicity, thus meeting the criterion of Ockham's Razor, or as scientists, term it, The *Law of Parsimony*' (Erickson 2013:583). In chapter 12, I will critically evaluate this assertion.

Some questions can definitely be asked. Is our sinful nature something we have to repent of? Do people become guilty of Adam's sin by merely approving of it, or by allowing the sinful nature to control us, and thereby committing an actual sin of their own? Do individual humans inherit conditional guilt by virtue of Adam's sin, or is it simply the entirety of humanity that is guilty since the entirety of humanity sinned in Adam? In other words, does God's law hold someone guilty for what they have not done?

To conclude my review of Erickson's views of sin, I will consider corporate personality and sin.

### **8.3.5 Corporate Personality and Sin**

Erickson argues that the biblical concept of a corporate personality is important to an understanding of what he calls 'social sin' (Erickson 2013:594). A general review of social sin is not relevant to this study. What is relevant, is the concept of corporate personality.

In the nation of Israel, the actions of individuals were generally not regarded as isolated from the actions of the group (cf. Erickson 2013:594). While it is true that on occasion the actions of a subgroup were separated from those of the rest of the nation (the case of Korah and his group is in reference here), at other times the whole group suffered for the actions of one or a few (Erickson 2013:594). A good example is found in Joshua 7, where,

because of Achan's sin, 36 men of Israel were killed at Ai, 3,000 fighting men were put to flight, and the entire nation suffered the humiliation of defeat (Erickson 2013:594). When the culprit was discovered, not only was he stoned, but also his household with him. It appears that the principle of a whole group being bound by the actions of one of their members was not uncommon in other nations as well. For instance, Goliath and David went out to fight each other with the understanding that the results of their individual struggle would determine the outcome of the conflict between their nations (cf. 1 Sam 17). When David defeated Goliath, it was understood that all the Philistine soldiers were defeated, and they fled (1 Sam 17:51).

Erickson asserts that Paul has developed the idea of a corporate personality most dramatically in his discussion of the effect of Adam's sin upon the entire human race (Erickson 2013:594). Through one person, sin came into the human race, and death through sin, and this death has spread to all people (Rom 5:12). There is thus an interlocking character to the human race, so that we do not function in isolation. It is Erickson's contention that the sin of Adam has brought judgement, affliction, and death to each and every person who has ever lived (Erickson 2013:594).

It is interesting to note that many modern sociologists and other behavioural scientists have the conviction that we cannot separate the individual and their actions from society as a whole (Erickson 2013:594). Thus, we always find ourselves in the decisions and actions of our lives, functioning within the context of society and conditioned by its realities (cf. Gilkey 1979:155-157).

Erickson (2013:595) suggests that the concept of a corporate personality can be found in Exodus 20:5 where the Lord visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him. According to Erickson (2013:595), this could be taken as a vindictive God's pledge to avenge Himself upon innocent descendants of guilty ancestors. He states, however, that it should instead be taken as a declaration that sinful patterns of actions and their consequences are transmitted from one generation to the next (Erickson 2013:595). This transmission may be a generic,

hereditary matter, or it may be an environmental matter, stemming from either example or conditioning. Thus, countless cases of patterns of behaviour are repeated generation after generation (Erickson 2013:595-596). For example, it has been established that most child abusers were themselves abused by their parents, and alcoholism frequently recurs in one's children (Schuckit 2009:5-14).

To conclude Erickson's views of sin, it should be stated that he takes a very comprehensive view of the nature of sin. Sin (action) originates from humans themselves because they are by nature sinful. In other words, humans are not only sinners because they commit sinful acts, they are also sinners because they are born with the tendency, propensity, or inclination toward sin. The sin of Adam affected the entire human race because of his natural headship where God in His special creation, has put all of us in the first human. Death came as a result of Adam's first sin. It spread to all of humanity because all of humanity sinned in Adam. The guilt of humans is as a result of their participation in Adam's sin which they ratify when they reach the age of responsibility by not abhorring their sinful nature. This sinful nature needs to be repented of. Before children reach the age of responsibility or moral competence, they are not condemned. Therefore, if they die before reaching the age of moral competence, they will enjoy eternal life with Jesus Christ just like those who repented of their sins after receiving God's grace. Sin affects our relationship with God and with other humans. It also affects us as individual human beings. Human beings are so sinful that in and of themselves they cannot come out of the grip of sin. Outside Jesus Christ all humans are in a state of slavery to sin, where they are unable to free themselves. Sin has a social dimension as well, where the actions of an individual human being affect the entire society. The biblical understanding of the social dimension of sin is based on a corporate personality, which Paul elucidated in Romans 5:12-21. Through one person, sin came into the human race, and death through sin, and this death has spread to all people (Rom 5:12).

The solution to the sin problem is found in Jesus Christ who became a human being so that He may save humans. In what follows therefore, I will review Erickson's view of the human nature of Jesus Christ. In his book, *Christian Theology* (Erickson 2013), Erickson



moves from hamartiology (which has already been discussed) to Christology. However, in Erickson's view, Jesus who came to solve the problem of sin, took the spiritual nature of Adam and Eve before they fell. I will review his claims that Jesus escaped the law of heredity for purposes of evaluating his pre-fall position on the humanity of Jesus. However, in his *Christian Theology*, Erickson does not say much on the exact humanity that Jesus Christ assumed, probably because, in his view, it is generally taken by scholars that He became a human being.

#### **8.4 The humanity of Jesus Christ**

In reviewing the humanity of Jesus Christ as understood by Erickson, I will look at its importance, biblical evidence, the sinlessness of Jesus, the unity of the Person of Jesus, and the virgin birth. Then I will look at His death and resurrection.

##### **8.4.1 The Importance of the Humanity of Jesus**

According to Erickson (2013:644), the importance of Jesus' humanity cannot be overestimated, for the issue in the incarnation pertains to our salvation. In his view, the human problem is an ontological gap between us and God (Erickson 2013:644). He argues that God is far superior to humans, so much so that He cannot be known by an unaided human reason. Thus, if He is to be known, God must take some initiative to make Himself known to humanity. It is contended that the problem is not merely ontological, as there is a spiritual and moral gap between humans and God – a gap created by humans' sin (Erickson 2013:645). Humans cannot, by their own moral effort, counter their sin in order to elevate themselves to the level of God. Therefore, if there is to be fellowship between the two, they have to be united in some other way. The fellowship of the two has been accomplished by the incarnation, in which deity and humanity were united in one Person, as Erickson argues:

If, however, Jesus was not really one of us, humanity has not been united with deity and we cannot be saved. For the validity of the work accomplished in Christ's death, or at least its applicability to us as human beings, depends upon the reality of his humanity, just

as its efficacy depends upon the genuineness of his deity (Erickson 2013:645).

It is further contended by Erickson (2013:645) that Jesus' intercessory ministry depends on His humanity. Thus, if He was truly one of us, experiencing all of the human temptations and trials, then He is able to understand and empathise with us in our struggles as humans (Erickson 2013:645). On the other hand, if He was not human or only incompletely human, He could not really intercede as a priest must on behalf of those he represents (Erickson 2013:645).

It is important to find out if there is some biblical evidence for a conception of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Erickson found quite a few of them. As a matter of fact he argues that the topic of the humanity of Jesus Christ does not, in some ways, arouse the attention and controversy that His deity does (Erickson 2013:644): 'It seems on first glance to be something of a self-evident matter, for whatever Jesus was, He most surely must have been human'. In other words, the Bible is very clear that Jesus Christ was a human being. He did not just resemble human beings – He was indeed a human being Himself.

#### **8.4.2 Biblical Evidence for the Humanity of Jesus Christ**

Erickson (2013:645) confirms that there is ample biblical evidence that Jesus was fully human, not lacking any of the essential elements of humanity that constitute each of us. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus had a fully human body since He was born. He did not descend from heaven and suddenly appear upon earth, but was conceived in the womb of a human mother and nourished prenatally like any other child (Erickson 2013:645): 'Although his conception was unique, not involving a male human, the process from that point on was apparently identical to what every human foetus experiences'. In the Bible, the terminology describing the birth of Jesus is the same as that used of ordinary human births, although His birth was under remarkable circumstances (Erickson 2013:644). He also had a typical family tree, as is indicated by the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. There is no doubt that He had ancestors and presumably received genes from them just as every other human being receives genes from their parents.

According to Erickson (2013:645), Jesus' physical human nature cannot only be deduced from His birth, it can also be inferred from His life, for we are told that He grew 'in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and men' (Luke 2:52). He grew physically, nourished by food and water. He did not have unlimited physical strength, although His body may have been closer to perfection than ours in some respects, because He did not have any of the sins that affects health in Him (Erickson 2013:645).

Erickson asserts that Jesus had the same physiology and physical limitations as other humans, for He experienced hunger (Matt 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), and fatigue (John 4:6) (Erickson 2013:645). Thus, He was justifiably dismayed when His disciples fell asleep while He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, for He experienced the same type of weariness that they did (Matt 26:36, 40-41).

According to Erickson, the death of Jesus Christ also suggests that He was a physical human being: 'Finally, Jesus suffered physically and died, just like everyone else. This is evident in the entire crucifixion story, but perhaps most clear in John 19:34, where we read that a spear was thrust in his side, and water and blood mingled came out, indicating that he had already died' (Erickson 2013:646).

Erickson (2013:646) contends: 'Surely he had felt physical suffering (as genuinely as would you and I) when he was beaten, the crown of thorns was placed on his head, and the nails were driven through his hands (or wrists) and feet'. The point to note is that Erickson is very sure that Jesus Christ was a real human being.

In Erickson's opinion, another indication for the physical human nature of Jesus is found in the fact that His contemporaries had a genuine physical perception of Him, suggesting that He had a physical body (Erickson 2013:646). In 1 John 1:1, for example, John was establishing the reality of the human nature of Jesus, as he actually heard, saw, and touched Him. In this respect, Erickson relates:

Touch was thought by the Greeks to be the most basic and most reliable of the senses, for it is a direct perception – no medium intervenes between the perceiver and the object perceived. Thus, when John speaks of what ‘our hands have touched’, he is emphasizing just how thoroughly physical was the manifestation of Jesus (Erickson 2013:646).

Apart from the physical human nature of Jesus, Erickson (2013:646) alleges that, on a psychological level, He was also fully and genuinely human. Erickson finds in Scripture the attribution to Jesus of the same sort of emotional and intellectual qualities found in other men. In other words, Jesus did not lack any of these emotional and intellectual qualities common to humans. For example, He showed astonishment in response to both positive and negative situations (Erickson 2013:647) – He marvelled at the faith of the centurion (Luke 7:9) and the unbelief of the residents of Nazareth (Mark 6:6). Jesus was also sometimes troubled as can be seen in His peculiarly human reaction to a variety of situations, especially His sense of the death to which He had to go (Erickson 2013:647). Although He acutely felt the necessity and importance of His mission (Luke 12:50), the awareness of what it would entail, troubled His soul (John 12:27). The garden of Gethsemane experience demonstrates that He was obviously in struggle and in stress and apparently did not want to be left alone (Mark 14:32-42). Jesus’ outcry on the cross (Mark 15:34) was also a very human expression of loneliness (Erickson 2013:647). His reaction on the death of Lazarus (John 11:33, 35, 38) suggests that He ‘possessed a human nature capable of feeling sorrow and remorse as deeply as we do’ (Erickson 2013: 647).

Intellectually, Jesus rather had remarkable knowledge. Erickson (2013:647) argues that He knew the past, present, and future to a degree not available to ordinary human beings. For instance, He knew the thoughts of both His friends (Luke 9:47) and His enemies (Luke 6:8); He could read the character of Nathaniel (John 1:47-48); He knew what was in each person (John 2:25); He knew that the Samaritan woman had had five husbands and was presently living with a man to whom she was not married (John 4:18); He knew that

Lazarus was already dead (John 11:14); and He knew that Judas would betray Him (Matt 26:25) and that Peter would deny Him (Matt 26:34). Indeed, He knew all that was to happen to Him (John 18:4).

Jesus' knowledge, however, was not without limits, as He frequently asked questions, pictured by the Gospels that He did not know the answers (Erickson 2013:647). While it is true that some people, particularly teachers, ask questions although they know the answers to it, the context of some of the questions that Jesus asked suggests that He needed information that He did not possess (Morris 1958:45). For example, He asked the father of the epileptic boy how long he had been in that condition (Mark 9:21), because He lacked this information for the proper cure. In discussing the second coming, Jesus said that He did not know about the day or the hour (Mark 13:32). He therefore expressly declared that there was certain information that He did not have, just as other humans may not know certain things (Erickson 2013:648).

Some scholars have suggested that Jesus had the same limitations we have with respect to discursive knowledge (knowledge gained by the process of reasoning or by receiving piecemeal information from others), but had a complete and immediate perception in matters of intuitive knowledge (Bicknell 1955:68-69). Erickson (2013:648), however, argues that this does not fit the facts completely: It does not explain His knowledge of the past of the Samaritan woman, or the fact that Lazarus was dead. What appears to be the case is that Jesus had knowledge that was necessary for Him to accomplish His mission – in other matters He was as ignorant as we are (Morris 1958:48). Ignorance, however, is not the same as error. Jesus never erred, although He was ignorant with regard to some matters. Some modern scholars contend that He actually erred in some of His affirmations, such as His attribution of the books of the Pentateuch to Moses (Mark 12:26) and His assertion that He would return within the lifetime of some who heard Him (Mark 9:1; cf. Matt 16:28; Luke 9:27), for his generation would certainly not pass away until 'these things have happened' (Mark 13:30; cf. Matt 24:34; Luke 21:32). The argument is that since these predictions were not fulfilled as He claimed, He obviously erred. Nevertheless, Erickson (2013:648) argues that, in the former case, Jesus' attribution of

the Pentateuch to Moses does not conflict with any statement in the Bible, but only with the conclusions of critical methodologies, which many evangelical scholars reject. And with regard to the latter case, it is his contention that it is not clear that the reference is to the time of His return (Erickson 2013:648). He argues that Jesus' statement in Mark 9:1, for example, precedes the transfiguration by just six days, and in the Mark 13 passage Jesus interweaves references to the second coming and the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, while He confessed ignorance in some matters, He never made an erroneous statement (Erickson 2013:648).

Perhaps Orr (1952:150-151) can help on this point:

Ignorance is not error nor does the one thing necessarily imply the other. That Jesus should use language of His time on things indifferent, where no judgment or pronouncement of His own was involved, is readily understood; that He should be the victim of illusion, or false judgment, on any subject on which He was called to pronounce, is a perilous assertion.

It must be pointed out that the case of humans is quite different from that of Jesus. While He could be ignorant on certain matters, but not be in error, we are not only subject to ignorance, but also commit errors (Erickson 2013:649). Part of the wonder of the incarnation seems to be that, even though Jesus' humanity involved His not knowing certain things, He was aware of this limitation and did not venture an assertion on those matters (Erickson 2013:649). In this light, it is important for theologians to be careful to avoid the assumption that His humanity involved all of our shortcomings. Hodgson is correct when he observes that 'it is Christ who is the one perfect man, and we must measure our manhood (sic.) by the standard of His' (Hodgson 1928:27). However, perhaps what is important for the purposes of this study is that Jesus' ignorance of certain things confirms His humanity.

Jesus' religious life has also been viewed as evidence that He was indeed human. Erickson (2013:649) relates: 'While that [human religious life of Jesus] may sound

stranger and perhaps even a bit blasphemous to some, it is nonetheless accurate'. He attended worship services in the synagogues on a regular or habitual basis (Luke 4:16). His prayer life was a clear indication of human dependence upon the Father (Erickson 2013:649). He prayed regularly, and at times He prayed at great length and with great intensity, as in the garden of Gethsemane. Before the important step of choosing His 12 disciples, He prayed all night (Luke 6:12). The Bible records are replete with evidence that He felt Himself dependent upon the Father for guidance, strength, and preservation from evil (Erickson 2013:649).

It is noteworthy that Jesus used terminology, referring to Himself as a human (Erickson 2013:649). For instance, when He was tempted by Satan, He responded: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Matt 4:4). Jesus was applying this quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3. A clearer statement is found in John 8:40, where Jesus says to the Jews: 'But you seek to kill me, a man who has told the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this'. Peter and Paul also used such language in reference to Jesus. In his Pentecost sermon Peter said: 'Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know' (Acts 2:22). In his argument regarding sin, Paul compared Jesus and Adam and three times uses the expression 'one man' referring to Jesus (Rom 5:15, 17, 19). A similar thought and expression are found in 1 Corinthians 15:21 and 47-49. In 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul emphasized the practical significance of Jesus' humanity: 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.

Apart from all the biblical evidences that have been cited so far that Jesus was human, Erickson (2013:649) notes that Scripture also refers to Jesus' taking on flesh, that is, becoming human. Paul said that Jesus 'was manifested in the flesh' (1 Tim 3:16). John was emphatic when he said: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). It is suggested that one of John's purposes in 1 John 4:2-3 was to combat a heresy that denied that Jesus had genuinely been human: 'By this you know the Spirit of

God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God'. According to Erickson, it is apparent that, in these cases, 'flesh' is used in the basic sense of human nature. The same idea is found in Hebrews 10:5: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me'. Paul expressed the same thought in a more implicit fashion in Galatians 4:4: 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law'. On the basis of the evidence that has been cited, Erickson (2013:650) concludes:

It is apparent, then, that for the disciples and the authors of the New Testament books, there was no question about Jesus' humanity. The point was not really argued, for it was scarcely disputed (with the exception of the situation to which 1 John is addressed). It was simply assumed. Those closest to Jesus, who lived with him every day, regarded him as being fully human as themselves. They were able to verify for themselves that he was human; and when, on one occasion after Jesus' resurrection, there was some question whether he might be a spirit, he invited them to ascertain the genuineness of his humanity for themselves: 'Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have' (Luke 24:39). He did everything they did, except sin and pray for forgiveness. He ate with them, he bled, he slept, he cried. If Jesus was not human, then surely no one ever has been.

The question as to whether Jesus Christ was truly human is not my concern, for all the scholars I have selected for comparison and evaluation do not dispute it. My concern is the exact human nature that Jesus Christ took which, in the case of Erickson, was the pre-fall as I will show later. In what follows I will review his view of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ.



### **8.4.3 The Sinlessness of Jesus Christ**

According to Erickson, 'One further important issue concerning Jesus' humanity is the question of whether he sinned or, indeed, whether he could have sinned' (Erickson 2013:655). He confirms that in both didactic passages and narrative materials, the Bible is quite clear that Jesus did not sin. In Hebrews 4:15, which is one of the didactic or declaratory passages, it is written that Jesus 'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'. Jesus is described as 'High priest [who] was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens' (Heb 7:26), and 'without spot' (Heb 9:14). Peter declared Him to be 'the Holy One of God' (John 6:39, NIV) and taught that He 'committed no sin, [and] no deceit [was] found in Him' (1 Pet 2:22). John added that 'in Him there is no sin' (1 John 3:5). Paul also affirmed that Jesus 'knew [had] no sin' (2 Cor 5:21).

In the Gospels, Erickson (2013:656) finds both explicit and implicit claims by Jesus that He was righteous. For example, He asked His hearers: 'Which of you convicts me of sin?' (John 8:46). No one replied. Jesus also maintained: 'I always do those things that please Him [who sent me]' (John 8:29) and: 'I have kept my Father's commandments' (John 15:10). Jesus taught His disciples to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness, but the Bible gives us no report or record of Him ever confessing sins and asking forgiveness on His own behalf. This is because, throughout His life on earth, He did not commit any sin.

There are ample biblical testimonies of Jesus' innocence on the charges for which He was crucified, although, according to Erickson (2013:656), not absolute proof of His sinlessness. Pilate's wife, for example, warned: 'Have nothing to do with that just man' (Matt 27:19); the thief on the cross said: 'This man has done nothing wrong' (Luke 23:41); and even Jesus' betrayer, Judas, claimed, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood' (Matt 27:4).

According to Erickson (2013:656), Jesus' sinlessness is confirmed by the narratives in the Gospels. He observes that there are reports of temptation, but none of sin. Nothing reported of Him is in conflict with God's revealed law of right and wrong. Everything He

did was in conjunction with the Father. He concludes: 'Thus, on the basis of both direct affirmation and silence on certain points, we must conclude that the Bible uniformly witnesses to the sinlessness of Jesus' (Erickson 2013:656).

There is, however, the question of whether Jesus was fully human if indeed He did not commit sin. In other words, was His humanity, if free from all sin of nature and of active performance, the same as our humanity? Erickson (2013:656) responds: 'For some this seems to be a serious problem. For to be human, by their definition, is to be tempted and to sin'. Does 'sinlessness' not therefore take Jesus completely out of our class of humanity? In Erickson's view, this question casts doubt on the genuineness of the temptations of Jesus (Erickson 2013:656).

Taylor (1936:94) has stated the case directly and clearly: 'If a man does not commit certain transgressions...it must be because he never felt the appeal of them'. The assumption undergirding this argument seems to be that if something is possible, it must become actual, and that, conversely, something that never occurs or never becomes actual, was not really possible (Erickson 2013:656-657). Nevertheless, the Bible records that Jesus was indeed tempted in every respect as we are (Heb 4:15). Beyond that, the descriptions of Jesus' temptations indicate its intensity. For instance, the agony in Gethsemane when He struggled to do the Father's will, confirms this point (Luke 22:44).

In Erickson's view, Jesus could have sinned, but it is certain that He would not (Erickson 2013:657): There were genuine struggles and temptations, but the outcome was always certain. With one goal in life – to please His heavenly Father – Jesus did not in the least succumb to the devil's temptations. He relied trustingly on the power that His Father was always ready to give Him. He maintained a direct link with His Father. He allowed the Holy Spirit to control His life. Every morning when He woke up, He prayed for strength to live for His Father for that day (cf. e.g. Mark 1:35). As the day closed, Jesus disappeared from the crowd to commune with His Father alone (cf. e.g. John 6:15).

Then there is the question of whether the person who does not succumb to temptation, really feels it, or does not, as Taylor has contended (Taylor 1936:94). Morris (1958:51-52) argues that the reverse of Taylors' contention is true: The person who resists, knows the full force of temptation. Erickson (2013:657) is on this point in harmony with Morris, for he argues that sinlessness points to a more intense rather than less intense temptation. Morris (1958:51-52) asserts:

The man who yields to a particular temptation has not felt its full power. He has given in while the temptation has yet something in reserve. Only the man who does not yield to a temptation, who, as regards the particular temptation, is sinless, knows the full extent of that temptation.

In Erickson's view, it is possible that someone who has yielded to temptation may have yielded at the point of its maximum force, but one simply cannot conclude that where sin has not been committed, temptation has not been experienced – the contrary may very well be true (Erickson 2013:657). It would appear, therefore that, in Erickson's view, which is shared by Morris, it is not the person who yields to temptation who really knows and feels its full force, but the one who does not yield. Therefore, Jesus who did not yield to temptation, felt its full force.

One question remains to be answered: 'Is a person who does not sin truly human?' To this question, Erickson (2013:657) responds: 'If we say no, we are maintaining that sin is part of the essence of human nature'. In his opinion, such a view must be considered a serious heresy by anyone who believes that the human has been created by God, since God would then be the cause of sin, the creator of a nature that is essentially evil (Erickson 2013:657). He argues: 'Inasmuch as we hold that, on the contrary, sin is not part of the essence of human nature' (Erickson 2013:657). Thus, instead of asking: 'Is Jesus as human as we are?', we might better ask: 'Are we as human as Jesus?' (Erickson 2013:657). In his view, this is the correct question to ask:

For the type of human nature that each of us possesses is not pure human nature. The true humanity created by God has in our case

been corrupted and spoiled. There have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall), and Jesus. All the rest of us are but broken, corrupted versions of humanity. Jesus is not only as human as we are; he is more human. Our humanity is not a standard by which we are to measure his. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured (Erickson 2013:657-658).

Erickson should definitely be asked some questions: What makes Jesus the standard against which we are to be measured? Is it the type of human nature that He possessed? Is it the fact that He perfectly obeyed God, or, is it both the human nature that He possessed and the fact that He perfectly obeyed God? Is a person, other than Jesus Christ, who, in his/her own strength does not sin, really human? The last question refers to a person in a fallen human nature, which may not be what Erickson has in mind. In chapter 12, I will canvass these questions in order to fully understand Erickson's position on human nature and sin, especially in relation to Jesus Christ.

There are some implications of the humanity of Jesus, which are necessarily for the purposes of this study to point out.

#### **8.4.3.1 Implications of the Humanity of Jesus**

Erickson (2013:658) states that the doctrine of the full humanity of Jesus has great significance for the Christian faith and theology. For the purpose of brevity, I will reproduce the implications as Erickson has pointed them out, with minor alterations where necessary:

1. The atoning death of Jesus can truly avail for us. It was not some outsider to the human race who died on the cross. He was one of us, and thus could truly offer a sacrifice on our behalf. Just like the OT priest, Jesus was a human who offered a sacrifice on behalf of His fellows.

2. Jesus can truly sympathize with and intercede for us. He has experienced all that we might undergo. When we are hungry, weary, lonely, He fully understands, for He has gone through it all (Heb. 4:15).
3. Jesus manifests the true nature of humanity. While we are sometimes inclined to draw our conclusions as to what humanity is from an inductive examination of ourselves and those around us, these are but imperfect instances of humanity. Jesus has not only told us what perfect humanity is; He has exhibited it.
4. Jesus can be our example. He is not some celestial superstar but one who has lived where we live. We can therefore look to Him as a model of the Christian life. The biblical standards for human behaviour, which seem to us to be so hard to attain, are seen in Him to be within human possibility. Of course, there must be full dependence upon the grace of God. The fact that Jesus found it necessary to pray and depend upon the Father is indication that we must be similarly reliant upon Him.
5. Human nature is good. When we tend toward asceticism – regarding human nature, and particularly physical nature, as somehow inherently evil or at least inferior to the spiritual and immaterial – the fact that Jesus took upon Himself our full human nature is a reminder that to be human is not evil; it is good.
6. God is not totally transcendent. He is not so removed from the human race. If He could actually live among us at one time as a real human person, it is not surprising that He can and does act within the human realm today as well.

Erickson (2013:658) invites us to rejoice with John that the incarnation was real and complete: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14).

The following questions can still be asked to Erickson: Is Jesus, whose nature was different from ours in our fallen state, really an example to us? Even if we talk of Him being an example to believers, does the fact that His human nature was different from ours, not take Him out of our reach? I am tempted in a fallen nature, which was not the case with Erickson's Jesus; how then, is He able to sympathise with me? Which human nature is good: Is it the pre-fall or the post-fall nature? If the answer is obviously the pre-fall since, according to Erickson, that is the nature that Jesus took, how does that help me who only hopes to attain that nature at the second coming of Jesus Christ? These questions need answers for people who need hope in life, and who are awaiting the second coming of Jesus Christ. These questions will guide me as I evaluate Erickson's Christology.

At this point, I will leave these questions hanging until chapter 12, while I now review Erickson's view of the unity of the Person of Jesus Christ.

#### **8.4.4 The Unity of the Person of Jesus Christ**

According to Erickson (2013:659), the unity of the divine and human natures of Jesus has extensive implications for the understanding of Christian theology. In his view, the biblical and historical material support the view that Jesus had both a human and divine nature united in one Person (Erickson 2013:659-660). It should be pointed out, however, that this does not come directly from a human perspective, for humanity cannot comprehend such a joining of two natures (Erickson 2013:660). In this review I will discuss the importance and difficulty of the issue, the biblical material, and the basic tenets of the doctrine of two natures in one Person.

##### **8.4.4.1 The Importance and Difficulty of the Issue**

Erickson (2013:660) asserts that the doctrine of two natures in one Person is one of the most difficult of all theological problems, ranking with the Trinity and the relationship of the human free will and divine sovereignty. It is, however, an issue of greatest importance. Christology in general is important because Jesus' incarnation involved the bridging of the metaphysical, moral, and spiritual gap between God and the human race (Erickson

2013:660). The bridging of this gap depended upon the unity of deity and humanity within Jesus Christ, for if Jesus was both God and a human, but the two natures were not united, then, although smaller, the gap remains (Erickson 2013:660). It is Erickson's contention that the separation of God and the human race is still a difficulty that has to be overcome. In his opinion, if the redemption accomplished on the cross is to avail for humankind, it must be the work of the human Jesus (Erickson 2013:660). On the other hand, if it is to have the infinite value necessary to atone for the sins of all human beings in relationship to an infinite and perfectly holy God, then it must be the work of the divine Jesus as well (Erickson 2013:660-661). Thus, if the death of the Saviour is not the work of a unified God-Man, it will be deficient at one point or the other (Erickson 2013:661).

On the difficulty of the issue, Erickson states: 'The doctrine of the unification of divine and human within Jesus is difficult to comprehend because it posits the combination of two natures that by definition have contradictory attributes' (Erickson 2013:661). For him, the issue is further complicated by the relative paucity of biblical material with which to work, for in the Bible we have no direct statements about the relationship of the two natures of Jesus (Erickson 2013:661). He suggests that, what should be done, is to draw inferences from Jesus' self-concept, His actions, and various didactic statements about Him (Erickson 2013:661). In what follows, I will review the biblical material in favour of the unification of the two natures in the Person of Jesus.

#### **8.4.4.2 The Biblical Material**

To start with, it should be noted that there is an absence of any references in the Bible to a duality in Jesus' thought, action, and purpose (Erickson 2013:661). Erickson asserts that there are, by contrast, indications of multiplicity within the Godhead as a whole, for example, in Genesis 1:26: 'Then God [singular] said, "Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image"' (Erickson 2013:661). He sees similar references, without a shift in number, in Genesis 3:22 and 11:7. There are instances of one member of the Trinity addressing another in Psalm 2:7 and 40:7-8, as well as in Jesus' prayers to the Father. However, it is noteworthy that Jesus always spoke of Himself in the singular: This is particularly notable in the prayer in John 17, where in verses 21 and 22 He states that He

and the Father are one, yet makes no reference to any type of complexity within Himself (Erickson 2013:661).

Erickson affirms that there are references in Scripture that allude to both the deity and humanity of Jesus, yet they clearly refer to a single subject (Erickson 2013:661). These references include John 1:14, Galatians 4:4, and 1 Timothy 3:16. In Erickson's view, the last text is particularly significant, for it refers to both Jesus' earthly incarnation and His presence in heaven before and after that (Erickson 2013:661).

Some references focus upon the work of Jesus in such a way as to make it clear that it is the function not of either the human or the divine exclusively, but of one unified subject (Erickson 2013:662). Included in these references, for instance, are texts like Ephesians 2:16-18 and 1 John 2:1-2. The work of Jesus in 1 John 2:1-2, which assumes both His humanity (1 John 4:2) and deity (1 John 4:15; 5:5), is the work of one Person, who is described in the same epistle as the Son whom the Father has sent as the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14).

According to Erickson (2013:662), there are several highly revealing passages in which Jesus is designated by one of His titles. For, instance, there are some situations in Scripture where a divine title is used in a reference to Jesus' human activity (Erickson 2013:662). In this light, Paul related: 'None of the rulers of this age knew [the secret and hidden wisdom of God]; for had they known, they would not have crucified the *Lord* of glory' (1 Cor 2:8; emphasis added). In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul wrote: 'He [the Father] delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins'. In this passage, the kingly status of the Son of God is juxtaposed with the redemptive work of His bodily crucifixion and resurrection (Erickson 2013:662). Conversely, the title 'Son of Man', which Jesus often used of Himself during His earthly ministry, appears in passages pointing to His heavenly status, for instance, in John 3:13: 'No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven'. John 6:62 is another example: 'What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where



He was before?’ According to Erickson, nothing in any of these references contradicts the position that the one Person, Jesus Christ, was both an earthly human and a pre-existent divine being that became incarnate (Erickson 2013:662). Nor is there any suggestion that these two natures took turns directing His activity (cf. Berkouwer 1955:293).

At this point I will turn my attention to reviewing what Erickson regards as basic tenets of the doctrine of two natures in one Person.

#### **8.4.4.3 Basic Tenets of the Doctrine of Two Natures in One Person**

Erickson (2013:669) suggests several crucial points to help understand the essential principles of the doctrine of the incarnation which, in his view, is a great mystery.

The first point is that the incarnation was more an addition of human attributes than a loss of divine attributes (Erickson 2013:669). In this light, Erickson argues that a better approach to Philippians 2:6-7 is to think of the phrase ‘taking the form of a bondservant’ as a circumstantial explanation of the *kenosis* (Erickson 2013:670). Since λαβών is an aorist participle in function, the first part of verse 7 would, in Erickson’s view, be rendered as ‘he made himself nothing by taking the very form of a servant’ (Erickson 2013:670). He opines that the participle phrase is an explanation of how Jesus emptied Himself, or what He did that constituted *kenosis* (Erickson 2013:670). Thus, while the text does not specify of what Jesus emptied Himself, it is noteworthy that ‘the very nature of a servant’ contrasts sharply with the ‘equality with God’ (Phil 2:6). The conclusion that could be drawn, therefore, is that it is equality with God, not the form of God, of which Jesus emptied Himself. In other words, while He did not cease to be in nature what the Father was, He became functionally subordinated to the Father for the period of His earthly life (Erickson 2013:670). In Erickson’s view, therefore, Jesus did this for the purposes of revealing God and redeeming humanity. Erickson suggests that by taking on a human nature, Jesus accepted certain limitations upon the functioning of His divine attributes (Erickson 2013:670). Nevertheless, these limitations were not the result of a loss of divine attributes, but of the addition of human attributes.

The second point is that the union of the two natures meant that they did not function independently (Erickson 2013:670). In other words, Jesus did not exercise His deity at times and His humanity at other times. According to Erickson, His actions were always those of divinity-humanity (Erickson 2013:670). He suggests that this is the key to understanding the functional limitations that humanity imposed upon divinity. For instance, Jesus still had the power to be everywhere (omnipresence), but as an incarnate being, He was limited in the exercise of that power because he possessed a human body (Erickson 2013:670). Jesus was still omniscient, but He possessed and exercised knowledge in connection with a human organism that grew gradually in terms of consciousness, whether of the physical environment or eternal truths. Accordingly, only gradually did His limited human psyche become aware of who He was and what He had come to accomplish (Erickson 2013:670). Erickson cautions that we should not consider this as a reduction of the power and capacities of the second Person of the Trinity, but rather as a circumstance-induced limitation on the exercise of His power and capacities (Erickson 2013:670).

The third point, according to Erickson, is that when we think about the incarnation, we must not begin with the traditional concepts of humanity and deity, but with the recognition that the two are fully known in Jesus Christ (Erickson 2013:671). In his view, our understanding of the human nature has been formed by an inductive investigation of both ourselves and other humans as we find them around us (Erickson 2013:671). This, in his opinion, should not be the case:

None of us is humanity as God intended it to be or as it came from his hand. Humanity was spoiled and corrupted by the sin of Adam and Eve. Consequently, we are not true human beings, but impaired, broken-down vestiges of essential humanity, and it is difficult to imagine this kind of humanity united with deity. But when we say that in the incarnation Jesus took on humanity, we are not talking about this kind of humanity. For Jesus' humanity was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall. He was not merely as

human as we are; he was more human than we are. He was, spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified. His humanity was certainly more compatible with deity than is the type of humanity that we now observe. We should define humanity, not by integrating our present empirical observations, but by examining the human nature of Jesus, for he most fully reveals the true nature of humanity (Erickson 2013:671).

It is important to add that Jesus Christ is also our best source for knowledge of the deity, for it is in Him that God is most fully revealed and known (Erickson 2013:671). John has put it this way: 'No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (John 1:18). The NIV puts it this way: 'No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself *God* and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known'. Thus, our picture of what a deity is like, comes primarily through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (Erickson 2013:671).

Erickson suggests that our assumption that the divine nature simply cannot be assimilated with a human nature is an assumption based on the Greek concept of the impassibility of the deity rather than upon the Bible (Erickson 2013:672). However, if we begin with the reality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we do not only recognise the two natures in a better way, but realise that, whatever they are, they are not incompatible, for they once did coexist in one Person (cf. Barth 1960:46-47).

It is Erickson's contention that, in connection with the possibility of unity between a deity and humanity, we need to bear in mind the distinctive picture of humanity given in the Bible (Erickson 2013:672). As the image of God, the human is already the creature most like God. Therefore, the assumption that humans are so dissimilar from God that the two natures cannot coexist in one Person, is probably based on some other model of human nature (Erickson 2013:672). In Erickson's opinion, it may result from thinking of the human as basically an animal that has evolved from lower forms of life (Erickson 2013:672). The Bible, however, is quite clear that God chose to become incarnate in a creature very much

like Himself. Erickson makes this interesting statement, which needs to be evaluated: 'It is quite possible that part of God's purpose in making humanity in his own image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place' (Erickson 2013:672).

The fourth point, according to Erickson (2013:672), is to think of the initiative of the incarnation as coming from above, as it were, rather than from below. He notes that part of our problem in understanding the incarnation may emerge from the fact that we view it from the human perspective (Erickson 2013:672). From this standpoint, incarnation seems very unlikely; perhaps even impossible. In Erickson's view, the difficulty lies in the fact that we are in effect asking ourselves how a human being could ever be God, as if it were a matter of a human being's becoming God or somehow adding deity to one's humanity (Erickson 2013:672). As human beings, we are keenly aware of our own limits, and know how hard or even impossible it would be to go beyond them, particularly to the extent of deification. It must be noted, however, that, for God to become a human (or more correctly, to add humanity to His deity), is not impossible (Erickson 2013:672). What should be clearly understood is that God is unlimited and therefore able to condescend to the lesser, whereas the lesser cannot ascend to the greater or higher (Erickson 2013:672). It is Erickson's assertion that the fact that a human did not ascend to divinity, nor did God elevate a human to divinity, but rather, God condescended to take on humanity, facilitates our ability to conceive of the incarnation and also effectively excludes Adoptionism (Erickson 2013:672). As we think about the incarnation, we should keep in mind that the heavenly second Person of the Trinity antedated the earthly Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, there was no such being as the earthly Jesus of Nazareth prior to the moment He was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary (Erickson 2013:672).

The fifth and last point is that it is also helpful to think of Jesus as a very complex Person (Erickson 2013:672). There are people with straightforward personalities – one comes to know them fairly quickly, and they may therefore be quite predictable. However, other people have much more complex personalities, whereby they may have a wider range of experience, a more varied educational background, or a more complex emotional make-up, such that when we think that we know them quite well, another facet of their

personalities appears that we did not previously know existed. In this light, Erickson observes:

Now if we imagine complexity expanded to an infinite degree, then we have a bit of a glimpse into the 'personality of Jesus', as it were, his two natures in one person. For Jesus' personality included the qualities and attributes that constitute deity. There were within his person dimensions of experience, knowledge, and love not found in human beings. This point serves to remind us that the person of Jesus was not simply an amalgam of human and divine qualities merged into some sort of *tertium quid*. Rather, his was a personality that in addition to the characteristics of divine nature had all the qualities or attributes of *perfect*, sinless human nature as well (Erickson 2013:573).

At this point, Erickson should be asked some questions that will help me to evaluate his understanding of the doctrine of two natures in one Person: Why did God become human? If humankind had not sinned, would God have become human? If the human nature that God took was that of Adam and Eve before they sinned, how did He deal with sin as nature or law that resides in the flesh of fallen human beings? God can do anything, except to commit sin. Then why did He have to become a human through another human, instead of just becoming a human by the same act whereby the first person was created? In other words, if God had become human by uniting His divinity directly with the soil from which the first person was created, was He not going to have a nature exactly like that of Adam and Eve before they sinned? It is possible that God can create in the womb of a fallen human being a spiritual nature that is different from that of the fallen human being (for nothing is impossible with Him), but why should He take that trouble if there is an easier way to do it? How did God unite His divinity with the *unfallen* humanity in a *fallen* humanity? If Jesus came to save fallen human beings, would it not make more sense that God should unite His divinity with the very fallen humanity that He came to save?

I will pursue these questions in chapter 12. For now, I will proceed to review Erickson's view of the virgin birth.

#### **8.4.5 The Virgin Birth**

Erickson (2013:674) argues that, after the resurrection, the virgin birth is the most contested event in the life of Jesus Christ. He states that, close to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the virgin birth of Jesus became an issue that tested people's belief in the supernatural (Erickson 2013:674): 'While the terminology "virginal conception" more accurately explains the meaning of a conception that is supernatural than does "virgin birth", the latter has become the most common expression in referring to this doctrine'. In Erickson's view, the two biblical references that discuss the virgin birth – Matthew 1 and Luke 1 – satisfy Scripture's consistency in the belief of the virgin birth. It is his contention that, as a key element of Christology, a belief that the virgin birth was a reality, is necessary for Christian theology (Erickson 2013:674).

##### **8.4.5.1 Possibility of the Virgin Birth Precluding Full Humanity**

Erickson (2013:685) observes that scholars like Brown (1973:56-61) have questioned whether Jesus was fully human if He had but one human parent. In response to this, he argues that this questioning of the fullness of Jesus' humanity confuses the essence of humanity with the process that transfers it from one generation to another (Erickson 2013:685-686). He relates that Adam and Eve did not have a human father or mother, yet they were fully human, and in the case of Adam, there was no prior human from whom his human nature could in any sense have been taken.

It may be objected that the absence of the male factor would somehow preclude full humanity (Erickson 2013:686). This objection, with its implicit chauvinism, according to Erickson, is not necessarily true. He argues that Jesus was not produced after the genetic pattern of Mary alone, for in that case He would in effect have been a clone of her and would necessarily have been female (Erickson 2013:686). What really happened, in Erickson's view, was that 'a male component was contributed. In other words, a sperm

was united with the ovum provided by Mary, but it was specially created for the occasion instead of being supplied by an existent male human' (Erickson 2013:686).

Here are a few leading questions to Erickson in this concern: Why did God have to create (only) a sperm for the occasion of the incarnation? Why did He not also create an ovum for the occasion? What was wrong with a sperm provided by an existing male? Is Erickson suggesting that divinity was joined to humanity through the sperm that God specially created for the occasion of the incarnation? Is it impossible for God to create a full human being using one human being? Did God not prepare Jesus' body in heaven and then join it to material from Mary's body by the power of the Holy Spirit or, did He have to create a sperm that fertilised Mary's ovum?

Leaving these questions for now, I need to review what Erickson suggests is the theological meaning of the virgin birth. In other words, why is the virgin birth important?

#### **8.4.5.2 The Theological Meaning of the Virgin Birth**

Erickson (2013:688) argues that on one level, the virgin birth is important, simply because the Bible records that it occurred. Therefore, whether or not we want to see a necessity for the virgin birth, if the Bible tells us that it happened, it is important to believe that it did, because not to do so is a tacit repudiation of the authority of the Bible (cf. Erickson 2013:688). This is to say that if we reject the virgin birth when the Bible says it happened, there is in principle no reason why we should hold to its other teachings. Therefore, rejecting the virgin birth has implications reaching far beyond the doctrine itself.

A question could be asked: In what specific way is the virgin birth important? There are four points that Erickson (2013:690-691) has proposed.

The first point is that 'the doctrine of the virgin birth is a reminder that our salvation is supernatural' (Erickson 2013:690). This is in line with what Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:5-6). John stated that those who believe and receive authority to become children of God are born, neither of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but

of God (John 1:13). The emphasis is that salvation neither comes through human effort, nor is it a human accomplishment. Thus, the virgin birth, in Erickson's opinion, points to the helplessness of humans to initiate even the first step in the process (Erickson 2013:690). He argues: 'Not only is humanity unable to secure its own salvation; it could not even introduce the Saviour into human society' (Erickson 2013:690).

As it were, the virgin birth is, or at least should be, a check on our natural human tendency towards pride (Erickson 2013:690). It was Mary who gave birth to the Saviour, but she would never have been able to do so, even with the aid of Joseph, if the Holy Spirit had not been present and at work (Erickson 2013:690). Thus, the virgin birth, according to Erickson, acts as evidence of the Holy Spirit's activity. It is a reminder that our salvation, though it came through humanity, is totally of God (Erickson 2013:690).

The second point is that 'the virgin birth is also a reminder that God's salvation is fully a gift of grace' (Erickson 2013:690). Erickson opines that there was nothing particularly deserving about Mary, for probably countless Jewish girls could have served to give birth to the Son of God (Erickson 2013:690). It is true that Mary manifested qualities that God could use, such as faith and dedication (Luke 1:38, 45-55), but she really had nothing special to offer, not even a husband, for Joseph had not yet married her. In this light, Erickson asserts: 'That someone who thus could not have a child on her own should be chosen to bear God's Son is a reminder that salvation is not a human accomplishment but a gift from God, and an undeserved one at that' (Erickson 2013:690).

Thirdly, it is Erickson's contention that 'the virgin birth is evidence of the uniqueness of Jesus the Saviour' (Erickson 2013:690). He elaborates on this: 'Although there could have been an incarnation without a virgin birth, the miraculous nature of the birth (or at least the conception) serves to show that Jesus was, at the very least, a highly unusual human singled out by God in particular ways' (Erickson 2013:690).

The fourth and last point is that the virgin birth gives 'evidence of God's power and sovereignty over nature' (Erickson 2013:690). As He had done with the births of Isaac,



Samuel, Samson, and John the Baptist, who were born when their parents were barren, and in at least one case, namely Sarah, after going past the age of child-bearing (cf. Heb 11:11), God demonstrated through the virgin birth that He is all-powerful, able to alter and supersede the path of nature to accomplish His purposes (Erickson 2013:690-691). Erickson relates: 'That God was able to work the seemingly impossible in the matter of the virgin birth symbolizes his ability to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of granting a new birth to sinners' (Erickson 2013:691). This is, as Jesus Himself said in regard to salvation: 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible' (Matt 19:26).

Since Jesus both died on the cross and rose from the dead as a human being, it is necessary to look at what Erickson states on these two important aspects of His humanity.

#### **8.4.6 The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ**

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are part of His atoning work. While this study focuses on His *Person*, it is difficult not to refer to His *work*, for His work helps us to understand His Person. This is the reason why it is important to briefly review Erickson's views with respect to Jesus' death and resurrection.

##### **8.4.6.1 Jesus' Death**

From the book, *Christian Theology* (Erickson 2013), it is unclear what Erickson's conviction is on the type of death that Jesus experienced. However, he seemingly believes that Jesus Christ experienced a *physical* or the *first* death. This inference is made from his statement, 'Apart from Christ's resurrection from *physical* death, we would remain in our sins, that is, we would remain spiritually dead' (Erickson 2013:558; emphasis added). If Jesus rose from His *physical* death, then He must have experienced that death. Since the physical death is defined as 'cessation of life in our physical body' (Erickson 2013:1072), it can be argued that Erickson believes that Jesus' death was a cessation of life in His physical body.

Interestingly, Erickson (2013:1073) argues: 'Death is simply a transition to a different mode of existence; it is not, as some tend to think, extinction'. This suggests that, in his view, when Jesus died, He transitioned to a different mode of existence before His bodily resurrection. Erickson also discusses Jesus' resurrection.

#### **8.4.6.2 Jesus' Resurrection**

As noted above, Erickson believes that Jesus rose from a *physical* death, as this is the death He experienced. It is His contention that 'Paul's theme [in 1 Cor 15] is that *physical death has been defeated* through Christ's resurrection' (Erickson 2013:558; emphasis added). In his view, 'Paul attributes to sin the power that physical death possesses in the absence of resurrection' (Erickson 2013:558). He observes, however, that 'with Christ's overcoming of physical death, sin itself (and thus spiritual death) is defeated' (Erickson 2013:558). Emphasis should be made that, in Erickson's view, Jesus' resurrection from the physical death overcame the physical as well as spiritual death.

Erickson shares the belief of Strong (1907:1073) that eternal death is the finalising of the state of spiritual separation of the Person from God, where one is lost for all eternity in one's sinful condition. The implication of this is that a person who experiences eternal death is completely separated from God – never to enjoy communion with Him. He (Erickson 2013:1074) argues: 'The second death is an endless period of punishment and separation from the presence of God, the finalization of the lost state of the individual who is spiritually dead at the time of physical death'. It would appear in Erickson's view that, since Jesus defeated the physical death through His resurrection from it, and since His resurrection from a physical death defeated sin (spiritual separation from God), and since eternal death is the finalising of a spiritual separation from God, it follows that Jesus' resurrection from a physical death defeated the eternal death for believers. Believers will not experience the second or eternal death (Rev 20:6) because through His resurrection from a physical death, Jesus defeated the spiritual death for them.

We experience a physical death even though Jesus' resurrection from it, defeated it, because it is 'one of the conditions of humanity as now constituted; in this respect, death is like birth' (Erickson 2013:1076). Erickson adds:

It is necessary to distinguish here between the temporal and the eternal consequences of sin. Although the eternal consequences of our own individual sins are nullified when we are forgiven, the temporal consequences, or at least some of them, may linger on. This is not a denial of the fact of justification, but merely evidence that God does not reverse the course of history. What is true of our individual sins is also true of God's treatment of Adam's sin or the sin of the race as well. All judgment upon and our guilt for original and individual sin are removed, so that spiritual and eternal death are cancelled. We will not experience the second death. Nonetheless, we must experience physical death simply because it has become one of the conditions of human existence. It is now a part of life, as much so as are birth, growth, and suffering, which also ultimately takes its origin from sin. One day every consequence of sin will be removed, but that day is not yet. The Bible in its realism, does not deny the fact of universal physical death, but insists that it has different significance for the believer and the unbeliever (Erickson 2013:1076-1077).

For the purposes of this study, it is important to review Erickson's belief regarding Jesus' resurrection and ascension bodies.

#### *8.4.6.2.1 Jesus' Resurrection Body*

The nature of Jesus' resurrection body is one question deserving special attention. The position that Erickson holds with respect to Jesus' resurrection body results from his reconciliation of 1 Corinthians 15:50 and John 20:25-27, which, in his opinion, seem to be in conflict. Paul wrote: 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption' (1 Cor 15:50). In John 20:27

Jesus requests Thomas: 'Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing'. Prior to this, Thomas had said: 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe' (John 20:25). In Luke 24:39, Jesus states: 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have'. It was after His resurrection that 'Jesus then came and took bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish' (John 21:13).

The point to note is that Jesus' resurrection body had *flesh and bones*. How then does Erickson deal with the alleged conflict between 1 Corinthians 15:50 and John 20:25-27? He argues that if we are to reconcile this alleged conflict, it is important to take into consideration the fact that Jesus was resurrected at the time He spoke to Thomas, but He has not yet ascended to heaven (Erickson 2013:710). It is Erickson's contention that, at the time of our resurrection, our bodies will be transformed in one step – however, in the case of Jesus, the transformation occurred in two events – resurrection and ascension (Erickson 2013:710): 'So the body that he [Jesus] had at the point of resurrection was yet to undergo a more complete transformation at the point of ascension'. He further opines that 'It was yet to become the "spiritual body" of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 15:44' (Erickson 2013:710).

Erickson shares this view with Orr (1908:196-202) and discusses this thought more elaborately in his book, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary incarnational Christology* (Erickson 1991:565-576), in which he clearly distinguishes Jesus' resurrection body from His ascension body. In Erickson's view, Jesus' resurrection body needed to undergo a further transformation before He could ascend to heaven (Erickson 2013:710). This, then, leads me to Jesus' ascension body.

#### 8.4.6.2.2 *Jesus' Ascension Body*

Since after His resurrection Jesus' body still needed to become a 'spiritual body', He needed to undergo 'the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of

his body' (Erickson 2013:711). From Erickson's reconciliation of 1 Corinthians 15:50 and John 20:25-27, it would appear that he suggests that Jesus' resurrection body was not yet ready to ascend to heaven. Otherwise, there was no need for Him to undergo 'the remainder of the metamorphosis'.

How does Erickson defend his argument? He argues that God is in a different dimension of reality and the transition from here to where God is, requires not merely a change of place, but of state. Based on this assumption, he asserts: 'So, at some point, Jesus's ascension was not merely a physical and spatial change, but spiritual as well' (Erickson 2013:711). This suggests that, after His bodily resurrection, Jesus still needed to undergo a spiritual change.

What is Jesus' current humanity? Erickson (2013:711) argues that Jesus' humanity is not the humanity that we have or even the humanity that He had while He was on earth – it is a 'perfected humanity of the type we will have after our resurrection' (Erickson 2013:711). It is interesting to note that Jesus' 'continuing incarnation imposes no limitation on his deity' (Erickson 2013:711). It is Erickson's contention that Jesus' humanity will ultimately be more glorious than ours. He asserts: 'Just as our bodies will have their limitations removed, so it has been with the perfect, glorified humanity of Jesus, which continues to be united with deity, and thus will forever exceed what we will ultimately be' (Erickson 2013:711).

Questions that can be asked to Erickson are as follows: Do the two texts, 1 Corinthians 15:50 and John 20:25-27, need to be reconciled as he suggests? Why did Jesus have to undergo 'the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of his body', whereas 'our bodies will be transformed in one step' (Erickson 2013:710)? Why was the metamorphosis of Jesus' body incomplete, whereas ours will be complete? Did the incarnation continue after Jesus' ascension? Did Jesus continue to be united with the deity? I will discuss these questions in chapter 12.

## 8.5 Conclusion

This review of Erickson's model of the humanity of Jesus reveals that he takes the prelapsarian position. He suggests that Jesus' spiritual nature was like that of Adam and Eve before they fell. Jesus was the true human with the humanity that God intended all humanity to be (the humanity before the fall). He was therefore essentially different from the humanity that He found (the humanity after the fall). Jesus did not have the law of sin that all humans who have descended from Adam and Eve have in their fallen flesh. He was therefore not tempted from the fallen flesh, which He actually did not possess. He was tempted in a way that true humanity (humanity before the fall) was tempted. More than that, He was tempted to use His inherent divinity independently of the Father. In this way, His temptations were bigger than the temptations that other humans experience.

Sin, in Erickson's opinion, is a failure to let God be God and placing something in God's rightful place of supremacy. In this regard, Jesus was tempted by the devil not to let God be God. The devil tempted Him to place something in God's rightful place of supremacy. Erickson also defines sin as an inner force, an inherent condition, and a controlling power. This definition of sin, in Erickson's view, applies only to fallen human beings who are born with this inherent condition – it does not apply to Jesus, since His nature was like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin.

Human beings are sinners, not only because they have individually committed sin – they are also sinners by virtue of the fact that they are naturally related to Adam, the natural head of the human race. Adam has ruined the entire humanity when he committed sin. His guilt and condemnation are the guilt and condemnation of the entire humanity, because of the fact that humanity was in Adam in undifferentiated form at the time he sinned. Therefore, humans inherit condemnation and guilt from their parents. This is what has theologically been termed 'original sin'. It must be noted that, in Erickson's opinion, condemnation and guilt become effective in one's life when one casts a vote in favour of the fallen nature that Adam gave to the human race, instead of repenting of it. This happens at the point where one becomes aware of right and wrong, and therefore becomes responsible or accountable for one's acts of sin. Thus, children who die before

they reach the age of responsibility are not condemned – they will enjoy eternal life and live with Jesus just like those who respond to God’s invitation to salvation.

Sin brought death. There is a physical death, a spiritual death, and an eternal death. Physical death is a result of sin, while eternal death is an extension of spiritual death, which is separation from God. Erickson argues that the second death is an endless period of punishment and separation from the presence of God, the finalisation of the lost state of the individual who is spiritually dead at the time of physical death. By conquering physical death, Jesus destroyed spiritual death. Erickson also views physical death as separation of the soul from the body. In the case of unbelievers, physical death is a separation from God.

Erickson believes in what he calls ‘disembodied survival’. He suggests that there is an intermediate state between death and resurrection in which believers and unbelievers experience, respectively, the presence and absence of God. He argues that, while these experiences are less intense than the final states, they are of the same qualitative nature. Thus, in his view, death is simply a transition to a different mode of existence, it is not extinction. He is in harmony with Berkhof (1953:668) who argues: ‘Life and death, according to Scripture, are not to be thought of as existence and nonexistence, but as two different states of existence’.

Jesus experienced a physical death. Through His resurrection from that physical death, He defeated both physical and spiritual death. Since He defeated spiritual death, He also defeated eternal death for believers, to the extent that believers will not experience an eternal death.

Through His resurrection from His physical death, Jesus underwent a metamorphosis, which was only completed at His ascension. At His ascension, His body became a spiritual body. It is now a body not like the bodies we currently have, but one that we will have after experiencing resurrection. His body, however, will be more glorious than ours,

because He continues to be united with the deity. This is Erickson's view of Jesus' humanity.

In the next chapter, I will review Gulley's view of Jesus Christ's humanity.



## **CHAPTER 9**

### **THE ALTERNATIVE, UNIQUE OR ‘NEITHER PRE-FALL NOR POST-FALL’ CHRISTOLOGY AS TAUGHT BY NORMAN R. GULLEY**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

In chapter 8, I reviewed Erickson’s view of Jesus Christ’s humanity. It was noted that Erickson believes that Jesus took the spiritual nature of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. It was in this sinless human nature that He overcame sin. However, Jesus’ physical nature was like that of fallen human beings. This chapter is a review of Gulley’s view of Jesus Christ’s humanity. In this review, I will follow the pattern that I followed in the last two chapters. I will begin the review with a biographical sketch of Gulley. Then I will look at his view of sin, after which I will consider his position on Jesus Christ’s humanity. Because He believes that Jesus’ mission determines what kind of human nature He assumed, I am compelled to briefly review his view of Jesus’ mission, which has more to do with His work rather than His Person. This is important to note since in this study, my major concern is the Person of Jesus and not His work.

#### **9.2 Biographical Sketch**

Norman R. Gulley is a Research Professor of Systematic Theology at the Southern Adventist University in Tennessee and holds a PhD degree in Systematic Theology from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He has taught in the Far East (Japan and the Philippines) at the collegiate and graduate seminary levels respectively, and in the United States during a long career of pastoring, teaching, academic administration, professional society involvement, writing, and extensive worldwide travel as a visiting lecturer. He has authored 14 books, contributed chapters to many others, frequently presented papers at professional societies, and authored numerous professional and popular articles in journals and magazines. He is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and has served on the ETS Models of God steering committee. He is a member of and past president of the Adventist Theological Society.

This review is focused on his views in *Systematic Theology Vol. III: Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Gulley 2012) and *Christ Our Substitute* (Gulley 1982).

### **9.3 The Origin and Nature of Sin**

In his *Systematic Theology Vol. III*, Gulley (2012:131-168) treats the topic of sin under the heading, *Human Fall and Nature*. He (Gulley 2012:134-135) asserts that human beings were created in God's image and before learning of God's law, which forbade them from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17), they were created in a perfect relationship with the Triune God and with each other – which is the essence of the law as described later by Jesus (Matt 22:36-40). He states that he concurs with the observation of Wesley (1996:54) that the entire law of God's love was inscribed in the hearts of these first humans. In other words, Adam and Eve had the law within, representing their relationship with God, a relationship that should have kept them loyal to Him through observing His eternal law (Gulley 2012:135).

According to Gulley (2012:133), sin began when Satan and his angels challenged God's government and were cast out of heaven by Michael (or Jesus) at the point that their revolt broke out into open rebellion (Rev 12:7-8). It has been noted that Jesus created this planet and all the things it contains, including human beings, but God's enemy, called Satan, came to spoil what God created, to fight a battle he hoped to win and to some degree get even with Jesus (Gulley 2012:133-134). In Gulley's view, it 'was after Christ gave humanity His seventh-day Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3) that Satan came to deceive Eve (Gen 3:1-6)' (Gulley 2012:134).

It is surprising that Gulley sees Christ in Genesis 2:1-3, whom I cannot see. He does not even explain how he concludes that the person who gave humanity the seventh-day Sabbath was Christ. According to Genesis 2, the one who creates and rests after six days is God (Gen 2:1-3). Yahweh Elohim (Gen 2:4-25) is the one who does the work of creation. While it is possible to assume that Yahweh Elohim is the very Word that was with God in the beginning and was God (John 1:1) on the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is against exegetical principles to make such assumptions without any biblical

support. I do not want to discuss this issue further because it is beyond the scope of this study.

### **9.3.1 The Method and Purpose of Temptation**

Gulley (2012:138) argues that Satan's method of temptation was that of insinuating doubts in Eve as a way of breaking the relationship between her and God. He shares the view of Demarest (1984:403) that Eve was tempted 'first to distrust God's goodness (Gen. 3:1-3) and then to disbelieve God's Word (Gen. 3:4-5)'. Satan came to Eve in an unexpected manner, which is what he has always done since that first temptation. He always insinuates doubts as a way of breaking the relationship between humans and God (Gulley 2012:138-139).

Blocher (1984:139), with whom Gulley is in harmony, asserts that the snake's attack on God's word impugned 'hidden motives' to God, which subject 'the terms of the covenant to 'the hermeneutic of suspicion'. The serpent questioned God's word in order to suggest that He cannot be trusted (Gulley 2012:139). He said that God knows that eating the fruit would make Eve like Him – 'which implied that Jesus had been holding out on humans' (Gulley 2012:139). Indeed, God had given her everything she had, but He did not say anything about becoming like God. Therefore, 'the serpent was basically saying that Jesus' death threat wasn't to keep them from harm, but to keep them from reaching their full potential' (Gulley 2012:139).

It is interesting to note that, while Genesis 2:16-17 relates that 'the LORD God' is the one who commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and that if he disobeyed he would surely die, Gulley suggests that the serpent's statement that if Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil she would be like Him, 'implied that Jesus had been holding out on humans'. The question I need to ask Gulley is: How does Jesus come into the picture in Genesis 3:4-5? At the time Eve was tempted by the serpent, the incarnation had not yet taken place, for it is in the NT that we find the angel Gabriel's statement about the incarnation (Matt 1:18-21; cf. Luke 1:26-38). It is possible that Gulley makes the statement above without thinking about how a critical scholar of

the Bible would view it. In my view, it is crucial that Bible scholars like Gulley stick to the Bible.

Another question to Gulley is: Was Jesus the one who threatened Adam with death in Genesis 2:16-17? I have already noted that Gulley may not have thought about how another Bible scholar would view his statement. It was the 'LORD God' who told Adam that if he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. It is possible that Gulley sees Jesus in Genesis 2:16-17 based on the doctrine of the Trinity and OT and NT statements that imply that 'LORD God' can apply to Jesus in His pre-incarnate state. It is not my intention to discuss this possibility, as such a discussion is beyond the scope of this present study. I will also not discuss this in the evaluation chapters. However, I need to mention that in replacing the 'LORD God' with Jesus in Genesis 2:16-17, without explaining and giving convincing reasons for doing so, Gulley does an illegitimate interpretation of the Bible. This applies to other statements he makes without regard to what the text says.

According to Gulley (2012:139), Eve knew that God made everything good (Gen 1:3, 10, 12, 19, 21, 25, 31) and that He called the forbidden tree the tree of the knowledge of 'good and evil' (Gen 2:17), but she called the forbidden fruit 'good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom' and took some and ate it (Gen 3:6). Gulley suggests that the serpent was probably eating some of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or at least touching it when addressing Eve. Therefore, Eve thought that was probably why the serpent was speaking her language (Gulley 2012:139).

It is the contention of Gulley (2012:139) that 'Satan succeeded on two levels: Doubt of God's Word led to disobedience (logical level), and the serpent was wise, spoke [Eve's] language, and was very much alive (empirical level)'. He argues that 'seeing was believing' concurred with logic, and so Eve took the plunge and ate the fruit (Gulley 2012:139).

It is important to ask: What was/is the purpose of temptation? What was/is Satan's aim in tempting human beings? Gulley (2012:139) observes that, from the beginning of the

cosmic controversy, Satan has had one purpose: To separate God's people from God. At the beginning of the cosmic conflict, he was able to win a third of the angels to his side (Rev 12:7-9). This is no mean feat, given that these angels were perfect, intelligent beings who lived in the very presence of God (Gulley 2012:139). Gulley opines that Satan accomplished this through the same means he employed in Eden: To claim that he had more to offer them and that God was keeping something from them (Gulley 2012:139-140). He suggests that the angels were tempted to gain more than was lawful for them: To become like God, just as Satan had schemed for himself (Gulley 2012:140).

It must be pointed out that Satan's promise to Eve was a great lie and after Adam joined Eve in eating the fruit (Gen 3:6b), the floodgates were opened for all the evil that has ravaged humans on planet earth (Gulley 2012:140). God knew about Satan's lie, and it is no wonder that during His life in human history, He told rebels that they were of their father, the devil, whose native language was lies (John 8:44).

Commenting on John 8:44, Gulley (2012:140) asserts that the Greek Bible calls Satan's lie 'the lie' (τὸ ψεῦδος). Thus, questioning the trustworthiness of the Creator is 'the lie', for Jesus is 'the way and the truth and the life' (John 14:6a). It can therefore be argued that 'the cosmic controversy, at its core, is the father of lies questioning the One who is the truth' (Gulley 2012:140). In Gulley's view, sin had effects on Adam and Eve, which I will look at in what follows.

### **9.3.2 Effects of sin on Adam and Eve**

Gulley (2012:142) has identified ten immediate effects of sin on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3: They hid from Jesus (Gen 3:8); they had fear (Gen 3:10); they discovered that they were naked (Gen 3:10); Adam blamed Eve (Gen 3:12); Eve blamed the serpent (Gen 3:13); pain in childbearing became the norm (Gen 3:16); the husband was now to rule over the wife (Gen 3:16); the ground was cursed with thorns and thistles (Gen 3:17-18); painful toil and sweat of the brow became the norm (Gen 3:17, 19); and death entered the earth (Gen 3:19).

According to Gulley (2012:143) these effects of sin 'reveal a broken relationship between humans and Jesus, and between Adam and Eve (the spousal blame game started right away [Gen 3:12-13])'. He argues that the fall meant a change in the human nature, but not in the divine nature (Gulley 2012:143). Thus, whereas sin brought a realisation of their nakedness to Adam and Eve, God clothed them with animal skins (Gen. 3:21). Gulley states: 'As soon as there was sin, Jesus stepped into the breach and held death back' (Gulley 2012:143). He observes that even though Adam and Eve had broken the love relationship between themselves and God, He never ceased loving them, even though He hated the sin for what it had done to them and to their relationship with Him. It should thus be pointed out that whereas sin had introduced a new reality as human nature fell, God's love for sinners (not for sin) remained unchanged (Gulley 2012:143).

Gulley's statement, 'As soon as there was sin, Jesus stepped into the breach and held death back' (Gulley 2012:143), needs to be clarified. Gulley believes that the Bible identifies three types of death, which I will discuss later in this chapter. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they died spiritually in the sense that they lost God's glory, which had covered them. The author of Genesis stated: 'Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings' (Gen 3:7). Paul mentioned spiritual death in Ephesians 2:1-3. There is also eternal or the second death (Rom 6:23; cf. Matt 25:41-46; Rev 20:10-15). The first or physical death is mentioned in several places in the Bible (cf. e.g. Gen 3:19). My view is that since Adam and Eve, and their descendants all died the first or physical death, the death that Gulley claims Jesus held back, is the second or eternal death (cf. Rom 6:23; Rev 20:10-15), which only those who reject salvation through Jesus Christ will experience (cf. John 3:16-21, 36; 5:24-29).

How did Jesus hold back death as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, when at that time the incarnation had not even taken place? When Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptised, John the Baptist pointed people to Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). John in the Revelation wrote: 'All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the beast], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev 13:8). A survey of Gulley's works reveal that he believes that the plan to save human beings was laid before Adam and Eve were created. When the decision was made for the second Person of the Godhead to incarnate and later die in the event that Adam and Eve sin, which as one who is omniscient, God was already aware of, at that very time, the Lamb of God was slain. Thus, Gulley suggests that immediately Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus held back death. In OT times, and until Jesus died on Calvary's cross, people offered animals to make atonement for their sins. The animal blood that was shed pointed to Jesus' blood that was going to be shed on Calvary's cross. For a detailed discussion of this subject, reference can be made to Gulley's *Christ Our Substitute* (1982) and my MTh- Systematic Theology (UNISA, 2015).

On the aspect of dominion, Gulley (2012:144) argues: 'Adam and Eve were created in the image of God to have dominion over the world (Gen. 1:26-27). But their sin brought them under the "dominion of darkness" (Col. 1:13), for Satan took the place of Adam as the representative of this world'. Gulley (2012:144-145) suggests that 'this is why Satan went to councils (Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2), why Jesus referred to him as the "prince of this world" (John 12:31), and why Paul spoke of him as "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4)'. It can therefore be argued that, to the degree suggested by God's word, Satan usurped the dominion from Adam and Eve that God had given them (Gulley 2012:145). Here it must be observed that even sinners saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus, united with God can have a loving dominion and an ecologically sensitive protection over nature (Gulley 2012:145). In other words, not all was lost, for God provided a plan to restore that which the devil deceptively got from Adam and Eve. Alongside the stated effects that sin had on Adam and Eve, it is important to also talk about the damaged imaged of God in them.

### **9.3.3 The Damaged Image of God**

Gulley (2012:145) opines that, while it is true that Adam bore a son in his own likeness, in his image (Gen 5:3) – a damaged image – Adam's son still bore the image of God. He asserts that it is for this reason that even after the fall God could speak of His image in humankind (Gulley 2012:145). For instance, in His covenant with Noah, following the

flood, God said: 'Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man' (Gen 9:6). Thus, Scripture clearly indicates that fallen humans retain the image of God, even though in a damaged form (Gulley 2012:145). The term used by James in James 3:9 for likeness (ὁμοίωσιν) is the same Greek term used in the LXX of Genesis 1:27 for likeness, which can act as a synonym for the image (εἰκῶν) of God (Gulley 2012:145). Paul admonished men to not cover their heads, for they are 'the image and glory of God' (1 Cor 11:7).

Gulley shares this view with Hamilton (1990:315), stating: 'Murder is placed in the orbit of sacral law. To kill another human being is to destroy one who is a bearer of the divine image'. He adds: 'Thus man's (sic.) divine creation should be a deterrent to criminal behaviour. There is no evidence here that sin has effaced the divine image. It (God's image) is still resident in post-Flood, post-paradise man (sic.)' (Gulley 2012:145).

Adamson (1976:146) says: 'We note that James, like Jesus, knows nothing of what is popularly thought of as the doctrine of "total depravity": though impaired the imago dei [image of God] is not totally destroyed'. Adamson, like Gulley, therefore believes that sin did not completely take away God's image from human beings.

The Reformer, Calvin (1989:323), argues:

Were any one to object and say, that the image of God in human nature has been blotted out by the sin of Adam; we must, indeed, confess that it has been miserably deformed, but in such a way that some of its lineaments still appear. Righteousness and rectitude, and the freedom of choosing what is good, have been lost; but many excellent endowments, by which we exceed the brutes, still remain.

It is important to observe that some scholars have opined that the image of God included an immortal soul that still remains in post-fall humans. Lenski, for example, claims:



These human beings still bear much of the divine stamp with which God created man (sic.): each is an immortal spirit, a person who has will, self-consciousness, knowledge, dominion. These are damaged but not destroyed, conscience still binds man (sic.) to the right and condemns the wrong (Lenski 1966:611).

Lenski (1966:611) also avers that the likeness of God in post-fall humans refers to a general image, but not to a special image (holiness and righteousness). In this regard, then, immortality of the soul is included in the general image of God – pre-fall and post-fall (Lenski 1966:611).

Commenting on John 11:25-26, Morris (1995:488) asserts:

They may die in the sense that they pass through the door we call physical death, but they will die in the fuller sense. Death for them is but the gateway to further life and fellowship with God. This transcends the Pharisaic view of a remote resurrection at the end of time.

However, Gulley (2012:146) states: ‘Simply put, Scripture teaches that human immortality comes only at the second advent, when death will be ultimately defeated’. In other words, Gulley does not subscribe to the doctrine of unconditional immortality of the soul which other scholars subscribe to.

It is necessary to delve deeper into the concept of the damaged image of God, especially with respect to the doctrine of total depravity. This is because this study deals with the humanity of Jesus in the contexts of the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity.

#### **9.3.4 Total Depravity and the Image of God**

In this section I want to look at what total depravity is as understood by Gulley. I want to review what Gulley suggests that the conscience does to the damaged image of God;

why the new birth is so important; and what nature reveals regarding the damaged image of God.

#### **9.3.4.1 What Total Depravity Means**

According to Gulley, depravity, though not totally, leaves a person without salvation. He asserts: 'Depravity affects body, mind, and spirit – the total person' (Gulley 2012:146). He observes that in Reformed theology, total depravity requires God to choose human destiny, because humans cannot choose and then God gives them irresistible grace, as humans are not capable of responding to His calling (Gulley 2012:146). In Gulley's opinion, however, human freedom to choose was not lost in the fall, although humans now need God's enabling power in order to willingly choose Him. He argues: 'Fallen humans are not responsible for Adam's choice to sin, but they suffer the full effects of that choice, and are self-centred from birth. They have fallen natures, and hence even their best deeds are without merit' (Gulley 2012:146).

Gulley relates that our fallen natures remain until glorification at the second advent, suggesting, however, that the entire Christian life, well lived by God's grace, is without merit to God and can never contribute one iota to salvation. Any good that comes out of our natures is marred with some traces of the self (Gulley 2012:146).

Gulley (2012:147) opines that sanctification is God's gradual changing of humans so that they have victory through Him over their fallen nature. It must be reiterated that in Gulley's view, God's work within humans never eradicates the fallen nature – that only happens through the work of Jesus at His second advent, as Gulley argues: 'In the process of sanctification the character is being changed toward perfection, but this is different from nature perfection' (Gulley 2012:147).

In contradistinction with Gulley, when Augustine (Schaff 1887:19) spoke of total depravity, he meant that all humans were participants in Adam's sin and thus shared in his guilt. To him, original sin means that all humans were present in the loins of Adam when he

committed sin, and so share in the guilt of that sin – ‘in which all have sinned’ (Schaff 1887:19). However, Gulley (2012:147) opines:

It is correct to say that sin entered the world through Adam and that condemnation passed on to all humans (Rom. 5:18). This means all humans are born sinners (Ps. 51:5), but Scripture does not say the human race was in Adam and sinned in him, and thus share his guilt.

According to Gulley (2012:147), in traditional theology, total depravity allows for a freedom of choice in secular matters, but not in spiritual matters (cf. also Reymond 1998: 450-456; Berkhof 1996:246-248).

Shedd (2003:768) postulates: ‘Upon the Semipelagian, the Tridentine, and the Arminian theory of depravity, there may be cooperation [between humans and God], but not upon the Augustinian and the Calvinistic’. Thus, theologians are divided on the subject of human depravity.

In his *Systematic Theology Vol. III*, Gulley (2012:147) avers:

The biblical freedom of choice isn’t interested in the anthropological assumptions that give too much credit to fallen humans in Semipelagian, Tridentine, and Arminian theories of depravity. Humans are helpless to save themselves, to earn salvation, or even to be worthy of salvation, but in awesome love, God reaches out to touch each life (John 1:9), to draw them to respond to the gift of salvation. God doesn’t change in nature or character (cf. Mal. 4:6; Heb. 13:8; Jas. 1:17). His nature is love (1 John 4:8-16); hence the fruit of the Spirit is love, which includes ‘longsuffering’ and ‘gentleness’ (Gal. 5:22-23). Calvary is the fullest revelation of God’s love, so Christ’s death for all humans should be the measure by which we interpret all Scripture about God. Properly understood all reve-

lation of God in Scripture is compatible with Calvary, as this system attempts to show.

In this light, Gulley (2012:147) asks: 'What do we mean when we say that *total depravity* affected Adam and his posterity? It means humans are fully under the control of Satan'. It is Gulley's contention that the effect of total depravity on humans includes their freedom to choose (Gulley 2012:147). He asserts that sin did not merely lead to physical death but included moral death. Thus, 'the deeper humans sank into sin, the further defaced their image of God became – until it was almost obliterated' (Gulley 2012:147). In Gulley's view, it is therefore not an exaggeration to say that 'the image of God in fallen humans was terribly disfigured but not destroyed' (Gulley 2012:147).

Gulley (2012:147) finds much evidence in Scripture, which supports the view that fallen humans are lost and without hope and have no way to extricate themselves from their depraved condition. He suggests that people are born sinners, and therefore they are in desperate need of a saviour, even before they commit their first sin. He clarifies this statement as follows: 'In other words, all humans are born with a sinful nature, and they will remain hostage to that nature if they live under its control of their thoughts and deeds. Humans are born as prisoners to their fallen nature' (Gulley 2012:147). David has already said: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me' (Ps 51:5). He observed that '[t]he wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born' (Ps 58:3).

This depraved nature reigns from birth (Gulley 2012:148). Texts such as Romans 8:5-7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:18; Jeremiah 17:9; and Matthew 7:18 seem to describe the state of the wicked before they accept salvation in Jesus Christ. Many of the wicked have already chosen to reject salvation. The Psalmist, for instance, related: 'The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts' (Ps 10:4). In the same light, Jesus said to some unconverted people: 'But you are not willing to come to me that you may have life...you do not have the love of God in you' (John 5:40, 42). It is clear that these texts speak from the perspective of the unsaved. Some wicked people

refuse salvation and this goes beyond any mere inability they have. It is because their fallen nature, which is under the devil's control, chooses not to submit to God, rejecting any overtures from Him (Gulley 2012:148).

According to Gulley (2012:148), fallen people, controlled by their fallen natures, can never choose to come to God by their own decision. Thus, in saving fallen humans, God must always take the initiative – otherwise, those people will always remain locked within their fallen natures (Gulley 2012:148). This approach of God to fallen people has been called by theologians, *prevenient grace* (cf. Gulley 2012:148). Gulley explains: 'It simply means that God comes to people to offer them freedom from their bondage to the fallen nature. He has a double right to make this invitation because He both created and redeemed humans' (Gulley 2012:148). Additionally, '[God] is the only One who can undo the results of the Fall' (Gulley 2012:148). The point to emphasise is that fallen human beings are in such a desperate state of sinfulness that they cannot come out of it without God's intervention. Fallen human beings cannot choose God without Him giving them prevenient grace.

Understanding the desperate plight of fallen humans, God can do for them what they can never do for themselves (cf. Eph 2:1-5). In other words, 'For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous' (Rom 5:19).

Gulley asserts that God's invitations to salvation can only be answered by His help. What this means is that when people sense the power of Jesus or the Holy Spirit and desire to respond, they do so only with the help of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Gulley 2012:149): 'The Christian life is a relationship experience, a covenant between God and humans'. Thus, speaking to Israel through Joshua, God said: '[C]hoose for yourselves this day whom you will serve' (Josh 24:15). Through Isaiah, God stated: 'Look to me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other' (Is 45:22). Jesus invited people: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink' (John 7:37b), and 'Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give rest' (Matt 11:28). The

Saviour Himself explains this coming to God when He says: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6).

In Gulley's opinion, some Gentiles – or non-Christians – respond to Jesus without knowing who He is (Gulley 2012:149). He observes that John, the apostle of love, wrote some words that can be translated in two ways, and both translations are true to the Greek grammar (Gulley 2012:149): 1) The 2011 NIV states: 'The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world' (John 1:9). It is Gulley's contention that the focus in this translation is on Jesus' incarnation. 2) The 1984 NIV says: 'The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world'. Here the focus, according to Gulley, is on Jesus' enlightening every person. It can be explained as follows: 'Christ came for every person; not only did He die for everyone (1 John 2:2), He also enlightens everyone (John 1:9). In other words, He takes the initiative through the Holy Spirit to enlighten every person' (Gulley 2012:149).

It would appear that, in His plan to save human beings, God who knew the desperate state in which human beings would find themselves, decided that Jesus' mission would include enlightening every person. Without this enlightenment, no one would ever come to salvation. However, what does the conscience do to the damaged image of God?

#### **9.3.4.2 The Effect of the Conscience on the Damaged Image of God**

In Gulley's view, humans are in possession of a conscience even after the fall. He observes, however, that this has nothing to do with having an immortal soul (Gulley 2012:149). In other words, 'conscience' is not the 'immortal soul' that some theologians, cited above, suggest. The question that follows this observation is: What does it mean that 'He [God] has put eternity in their heart' (Eccl. 3:11b) (Gulley 2012:149)? This question has been answered differently by different theologians.

Keil and Delitzsch (1986b:261) postulates that man's 'innermost wants cannot be satisfied by that which is temporal'. In other words, God has put it in the heart of every person that

they will not be satisfied with anything of a temporal nature. This is because satisfaction comes to one when one accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

According to Wright (1991:1162), a God-given sense of eternity and a desire to know the whole, elevate humans above animals and are evidence of their having been created in the likeness of God. The point to note here is that humans were made for God, for an eternal relationship and a future with Him (Gulley 2012:149). The all-knowing (omniscient) God knew that sin would interrupt His plan for eternal communion with human beings, therefore He devised a plan to allow those made in His image to be prepared to realise their God-given destiny. This is because humans were created for fellowship with God – they were not made to be God, but to be with God (Gulley 2012:150).

When Gulley speaks of the conscience, he refers to a point of contact in humans for God's enlightening (John 1:9). He suggests that this is the reason why many non-Christians have a sense of right and wrong (Gulley 2012:150). However, while the conscience alone does not equip humans to take the first step toward God, it is the destination of God's first step toward fallen humans. In other words, the conscience without God's enlightenment is insufficient to lead the fallen nature toward God (Gulley 2012:150). Gulley suggests that this explains the experience of the Gentiles as recorded in Romans: '[W]hen Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them' (Rom 2:14-15). He argues: 'While this law written on their hearts and an active conscience are evidence that the image of God has not been destroyed but defaced, it doesn't alter the fact that fallen humans are hopelessly lost without God's saving invitation to them' (Gulley 2012:150).

In their fallen nature, humans cannot save themselves. Salvation, by definition, must come from God alone (Gulley 2012:150): 'The wondrous good news is God saves humans without coercion of any kind, not even a predetermined destiny without input – without their freedom of choice... That is because fellowship with God before the Fall was

freely accepted by Adam and Eve, and can only be restored on the same basis'. Gulley adds: 'Likewise, the fellowship of God with Adam and Eve before the Fall was conditional – as long as they didn't eat the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:16-17) – and can only be restored on the same basis, because conditionality respects the freedom of humans and doesn't require irresistible force' (Gulley 2012:150).

This leads me to a review of what Gulley suggests is the reason why the new birth is so vital.

#### **9.3.4.3 Why the New Birth is so Vital**

Gulley (2012:150) observes that it appears common for some people to try to be good in their own strength – they are attempting to earn salvation in their own fallen strength. The truth, however, is that this is impossible, just as a leap cannot take them from earth to heaven (Gulley 2012:150). In this light, Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). Salvation only comes through Jesus Christ.

In Gulley's opinion, the first-birth dooms people to destruction, while only the second birth in Jesus brings salvation (Gulley 2012:151). It is Jesus who makes the difference, for if anyone receives Him, they are 'born of God' (John 1:11-13), for 'if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come' (2 Cor 5:17, NIV). Gulley comments: 'We have to become a new creation before we can enter the new creation, or new earth' (Gulley 2012:151).

In Gulley's view, a new birth is like a new person (Gulley 2012:151). This change is well explained by Paul in Titus 3:3-6, as well as by James: 'Of His own will [the Father] brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures' (James 1:18). It is Gulley's opinion that each member of the Trinity works together in this new creation of fallen humans, just as they did in the creation of the world (Gulley 2012:151).

It can be argued that the new birth is the beginning of a life that can lead to salvation (Gulley 2012:151). In this light, Gulley contends that just like new babies look perfect, so



do new Christians: They are bubbling over with joy and worship, praising Jesus (Gulley 2012:151). He observes, nevertheless, that even the new birth fails to remove the fallen nature, because at its best it is simply a decision to follow Jesus in response to His invitation: 'The Christian life', Gulley asserts, 'is a struggle between the two natures (Rom. 7-8) for the fallen nature will at times rear its ugly head' (Gulley 2012:151). He observes that Christians are becoming changed, but sanctification is a work of a lifetime, which involves a severe fight between the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the Christian, and the flesh, which remains until glorification takes place at Jesus' second advent (Gulley 2012:151). This Christian struggle is as a result of the fact that the fallen nature is not eradicated until the second advent (1 Cor 15:51-53), when finally, the work of being changed that began in the new birth is completed (Gulley 2012:151).

As we await the change that will take place in our fallen nature at the second advent, we must always remind ourselves that, at their very best, 'all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away' (Is 64:6, NIV). There is not even one fallen human being who does good (Rom 3:12b; cf. Ps 14:3b).

Nature also does something to the damaged image of God, which deserves my attention in this review.

#### **9.3.4.4 The Effect of Nature on the Damaged Image of God**

According to Gulley (2012:151), nature reveals God, even to those who bear a damaged image of God. In this light, Job says: 'But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?' (Job 12:7-9). David is in harmony with Job when he adds: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork' (Ps 19:1). About those who rebel against God, Paul said that 'what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse' (Rom 1:19-20).

In conclusion, Gulley (2012:152; original emphasis) states:

Total depravity, in the Augustinian sense of original sin that is passed down to all humans, is not biblical. From the human perspective *total depravity* means humans are lost and without God, and they have no chance of being saved. They must be born again but have no inherent ability to be born again.

From God's perspective, it can be related that He is omniscient, exactly knowing the hopeless condition of humans after the fall (Gulley 2012:152). According to Gulley, since the fall consisted of a broken relationship between humans and God, God planned ahead of that fallen condition in the following ways: 1) He created humans in the image of God in such a way that the image could be damaged by the fall, but not destroyed; 2) this included placing a conscience in each human heart – a point of contact within humans through which God could contact them; and 3) the Bible seems to suggest that the damaged image of God and the conscience could still see God revealed in nature (Gulley 2012:152). With these three advantages, God takes the initiative to draw humans to Himself to be born again, and even after their new birth, God stays with them to assist them in the process of sanctification, until glorification completes His work in the willing recipients (Gulley 2012:152). In Gulley's view, this is a relational way to restore the relationship that was lost in the fall, and during this relational remedy, God enables humans to use their freedom of choice to choose to live in a loving relationship with Him (Gulley 2012:152).

I have so far reviewed Gulley's view of the origin and effects of sin on fallen human beings. Perhaps what is crucial to this study is the nature of sin, which can be deduced from the definition of sin. Therefore, in what follows, I will look at how Gulley defines sin.

### **9.3.5 Sin Defined**

According to Gulley (2012:155), there are different ways in which sin can be defined. While it is correct to say that Eve was deceived, it is important to note that she chose to sin, for she could have resisted Satan if she had remained in union with God and believed

His word. Since believing is seeing, believing Yahweh's word would have led Eve to see through Satan's counterfeit (Gulley 2012:155). It would have saved the world all the misery it has endured. However, instead of embracing the idea that believing is equivalent to seeing, Eve experienced the apparent reality that seeing is equivalent to believing. What happened was that Satan led Eve to doubt God's word, and this led to disobedience. This brings us to the question of where sin began: Was it with doubt or with disobedience? Gulley suggests that it is by exploring biblical insights on sin that we will come to a better understanding of how Scripture describes the fallen nature (Gulley 2012:155). It must be pointed out that the position that one holds on the nature of sin and the fallen nature, determines one's position on the human nature of Jesus.

#### **9.3.5.1 Sin as Absence of Good**

Gulley (2012:155) reports that sin has been defined as the absence of good. The implication of this definition is that sin cannot be caused by God, for He cannot create the absence of good, as He Himself is good (Gulley 2012:155). As a relational Trinity, God has, from eternity, experienced a reciprocal relationship of love, in which each Person loves the other two more than He loves Himself (Gulley 2012:155). The overflow of this love is seen in creation and therefore, humans who were made in God's image (Gen 1:26-27) were to reflect a relationship of love, imaging the relationship of love among the Trinity. The other way to put it is that a relational Trinity made humans to be relational beings. Augustine said that 'the loss of good has received the name 'evil'' (Schaff 1885d:210). It is Gulley's observation that this philosophical definition is not sufficient. This being the case, he suggests that we need to turn to Scripture for an all-inclusive definition of sin.

#### **9.3.5.2 Sin as an Act**

In the word of God sin is defined as 'the transgression of the law' (1 John 3: 4, KJV), or 'lawlessness' (NIV, RSV). According to Berkouwer, '[s]in is always against God' (Berkouwer 1977:242). Sin is failing to do the good that one ought to do: 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin' (James 4:17, KJV).

According to Gulley (2012:156), there are many Hebrew and Greek terms that can be translated with 'sin', emphasising sin as an act. Examples include words that mean 'an error'; a word which means 'to err' or 'to wander about'; a word which means 'to hear incorrectly'; a word which means 'missing the mark'; words which mean 'to cross over; to pass by'; a word which means 'to deviate from a right course'; words which mean 'to rebel', words which mean 'treachery'; a word which means 'to fall way'; a word which means 'to bend or twist'; and a word which means 'abomination'. It must be observed, that many of these terms, within their contexts, also imply or suggest a state of sin. Sin is not only an act – it is also more than an act.

### **9.3.5.3 Sin as More Than an Act**

As already noted, sin is more than an act. This conception of sin is clearly taught in Scripture. Here, I will review what Gulley says about sin under three headings: 1) immediate roots, 2) tendency to sin, and 3) sin as separation from God.

#### *9.3.5.3.1 Immediate Roots*

According to Gulley (2012:156), in Romans 14:23 there is a definition of sin that reaches back behind the act to the motive that causes the act: '[F]or whatever is not from faith is sin'. He asserts that this is the deeper, inner life of sin (Gulley 2012:156) – in view here are 'the thoughts and attitudes [ἐννοιῶν], literally intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12)'. It was Jesus who said that corrupt fruit comes from a corrupt tree (Matt 12:33-35) – likewise, evil proceeds out of the human heart (mind) (Mark 7:21-23).

This understanding of sin explains why the law has more than an external relationship to the believer, for God said: 'I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts' (Heb 8:10; cf. Jer. 31:33; Heb 10:16). It explains why Jesus spoke of the inner meaning of law keeping and law breaking (sin), as having to do with thoughts and motives, even though no external act ever took place (Gulley 2012:156). Thus, a lustful look at someone else is the same as committing adultery with that person, even though it only transpires in the mind (Matt 5:28). It has been suggested that the understanding of sin as thoughts or motives explains why the tenth commandment goes deeper than external acts, for

covetousness is the internal act/state that precedes them (Ex 20:17) (Gulley 2012:157). We steal items belonging to other people after coveting those items from our inside – before we physically deprive people of their items, we have already done so in our minds.

#### 9.3.5.3.2 *Tendency to Sin*

Gulley (2012:157) makes this insightful comment: ‘Scripture penetrates beyond the thoughts, motives, and feelings that lie behind outward acts of sin, to a tendency to sin that is inherent in fallen human nature’. In this light, the Psalmist says: ‘The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies’ (Ps 58:3). Isaiah confirms this: ‘[You] were called a transgressor from the womb’ (Is 48:8). David understands sin as a tendency when he argues: ‘Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me’ (Ps 51:5).

Commenting on Psalm 51:5, Keil and Delitzsch (1986a:136) assert: ‘David here confesses his hereditary sin as the root of his actual sin. The declaration moves backwards from his birth to conception, it consequently penetrates even to the most remote point of life’s beginning’. The text teaches that sin is beyond an act; it is a tendency with which humans leave the womb. Humans are sinners, not merely because they commit acts of sin, but they sin because they are sinners. Before they sin by choice, they are already sinners by virtue of being humans, conceived and born in a sinful world. They inherit a sinful nature from their parents.

Gulley (2012:157) suggests that John the Baptist was an exception: ‘In contrast to these statements, John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Spirit even before he [was] born” (Luke 1:15)’. John the Baptist is the only human spoken of in this way in the NT (Morris 1988:77). Does this mean that John the Baptist did not have the natural tendency to sin? Gulley answers the question:

Of course, John was an exception because he was a chosen forerunner to prepare the way for Christ. At least we can say from history that even if the Holy Spirit is with humans from birth, all

except Christ have given in to the tendency to sin in spite of the presence of the Holy Spirit (Gulley 2012:157).

Gulley's statement, however, does not explicitly respond to the question. One should therefore interpret his statement to mean that all human beings (including John the Baptist and Jesus) have a tendency to sin, but only Jesus has not sinned, despite possessing the tendency to sin. It could be interpreted that even if humans (including John the Baptist and Jesus) with the tendency to sin, are filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, all, except Jesus, have given in to the tendency to sin. In other words, all have sinned, except Jesus Christ. This seems to be how Gulley intended this statement to be interpreted, for he includes Scripture: '[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23). He concludes: 'This is why all humans need to be born again (John 3:5)' (Gulley 2012:157).

In Gulley's opinion then, all human beings (including John the Baptist), are born with a tendency to sin. And all (including John the Baptist) have sinned. However, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth for the purpose of carrying out his mission as the Messiah's forerunner. While it is easy to tell from Gulley's statement that Jesus did not commit sin, it is difficult to tell whether He had a tendency to sin. Perhaps this will appear when reviewing Gulley's teaching on Jesus and sin.

It has been observed by Gulley (2012:157) that Exodus 20:5-6 seems to teach imputed punishment. He suggests, however, that it needs to be studied in light of Ezekiel 18:20, for what is at stake is individual responsibility for sin. He argues: 'Natural results can be passed on, but *guilt and punishment are never imputed*. Irrespective of one's parents, all babies are born with a tendency to sin' (Gulley 2012:157; emphasis added).

In this light, Strong (1949:579) argues that humans enter life in need of a saviour before they ever sin. The view is shared by Gulley and is very important in this study, because it is related to the idea behind Gulley's model of Jesus' human nature. In what follows, I will review what Gulley suggests lies behind humankind's tendency to sin.

#### 9.3.5.3.3 *Separation from God*

Gulley (2012:158) states: 'Behind these two roots of sin lies the need to understand exactly what Adam's sin was, what it did to him, and what he passed on to the race'. He argues that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, the resulting fall was a withdrawal from a trusting relationship with Him (Gulley 2012:158). He adds:

So, the essence of sin is separation from God, since it breaks the relationship with God. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God (Gen. 3:8) because sin had severed their ties with God... Before the overt act of eating the fruit, Eve had broken her relationship with God. It was doubt – a broken relationship – that led to disobedience (Gen. 3:1-7).

The point to note is that, with every sin, there is first something that happens in the mind before it is translated into an overt act.

Gulley follows the lead of Heppenstall (1964:122), who argues:

Original sin is not per se wrong doing, but wrong being. So, there is a causal connection between the first sin of the first man and the self-centeredness of his posterity... Trying to locate sin or the transmission of sin genetically simply misses the real problem. The issue is a spiritual one and not something in a gene. Sin is not genetically transmitted from parents to children. Sin must not be reduced to something physical.

It is therefore Gulley's contention that 'because of Adam, humankind is also in a broken relationship with God... This is the deepest root of original sin, and the very essence of what Adam passes on to the race: "an inherited disposition to sin" out of a broken relationship with God' (Gulley 2012:158).

The point to be noted for the purposes of this study is that, according to Gulley (2012:158), the 'essence of inherited sin from Adam is spiritual (broken relationship) and not genetic

(physical)...Although all humans are physically smaller, and live shorter lives than Adam, his original sin impacts us spiritually'. In Gulley's opinion, Heppenstall is correct when he concludes:

Any position that makes genetically inherited sin or its moral consequences the specific ground for the condemnation of the race, involves God in the responsibility. Once solidarity with Adam is interpreted to mean transmission of sin by a procreated posterity, responsibility goes back to the Creator (Heppenstall 1964:116).

For the sake of the evaluation of Gulley's views, which will be done in chapter 13, I need to ask some questions. Is it not because all human beings have descended genetically (biologically or physically) from Adam that sin (as a tendency) is transmitted spiritually to them? How would there have been a spiritual transmission of sin (as a tendency) if there was no genetic relationship between Adam and his posterity? If all human beings are born with a tendency to sin, was Jesus also born the same way? If Jesus was not born with a tendency to sin, how did He escape what applies to all human beings who are ever born in this world? These questions are very important in this study.

In what follows, I will review what Gulley says on the comparison between the two Adams in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

### **9.3.6 Two Adams Compared**

Romans 5 is one of the richest soteriological texts in the entire Bible. Scholars have debated it throughout the history of Christianity. It is not surprising, then, that Gulley includes it in his chapter dealing with the human fall and nature.

Gulley begins his exposition of Romans 5 by observing that, in studying this chapter of the book of Romans, Barth (1967:149-187) reversed the Adam-Jesus analogy with a Jesus-Adam analogy. This, according to Gulley (2012:159), was a disservice to Christian history. In other words, Gulley does not agree with Barth's interpretation of Romans 5.



Gulley (2012:159) is in harmony with Berkouwer (1977:509-510) who states that, in Romans 5, 'Adam, according to Paul, must stand in *light of Jesus Christ*. Christ is the *theme and starting-point* in this chapter' (original emphasis). Gulley contends that Romans 5 outlines the doctrine of justification within a soteriological framework (Gulley 2012:159). In Romans 5, the super-abounding salvation through Jesus is contrasted with the reign of death. The emphasis in this chapter is on what Jesus has done as the typological escalation to what Adam began. It is clear from Romans 5 that the entire human race is indebted to both Adam and Jesus (Gulley 2012:159).

Gulley (2012:159) argues that the crucial parallelism between what the two Adams brought to the fallen human race is not identical, for Adam's broken relationship with the Trinity caused all his descendants to enter this world in need of a saviour, whereas Jesus can only ultimately restore the broken relationship for those who accept what He did to bridge the gulf. It is important to note that Jesus has done more. What He has gained, is even more than what the first Adam has lost. Thus, Gulley asserts: 'The one sin of Adam has opened the gates to a sin situation, whereas the one act of Jesus more than atones for Adam's sin, for it atones for all subsequent sin too' (Gulley 2012:159).

Gulley sees a broadening of the definition of sin in Romans 5 where Paul stated: 'For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous' (Rom 5:19). He asserts: 'Clearly Adam's sin affected the race and constituted them sinners' (Gulley 2012:159).

The statement in Romans 5:19 may appear to be clear on the surface, but it has been interpreted differently by scholars. Gulley (2012:159) reports that some scholars interpret Romans 5 in light of verse 12: '[J]ust as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned'. They interpret this verse to mean that Adam merely began the process, and each human enters sin through their own personal sin. In Gulley's opinion, however, 'that view is flawed because babies can die before sinning' (Gulley 2012:159).

It has been noted that other scholars regard Adam as the one who did not only begin the process but influenced it (cf. Gulley 2012:159). This view considers the contributions of the two Adams to the human race. The human race received two gifts from the two Adams: condemnation and righteousness, respectively. The first Adam gifted the human race condemnation, whereas the second Adam gifted the human race justification. Romans 5:17-19 compares the two gifts to humankind from the two Adams – two gifts that are genuine and do not depend on human works (Gulley 2012:159). It can thus be argued that it is the obedience of Jesus that constitutes a person as righteous, not his/her own obedience: ‘Likewise, the disobedience of Adam constitutes a person as a sinner (having a broken relationship with God) before his or her own acts of sin’ (Gulley 2012:159-160). In this passage, ‘Paul penetrates beyond personal acts of sin as the reason for the human problem to the first sin of Adam that severed the race from its relationship with God’ (Gulley 2012:160).

Realising that there is still a problem that needs to be addressed, Gulley (2012:160) asks: ‘Then why did Paul also say that “death came to all people, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12)?’ He reports that the Medieval Catholics used the Latin Vulgate translation, ‘in *quo omnes peccaverunt*’, that can be translated with ‘in whom all sinned’, indicating that all have sinned in Adam. He claims that Augustine got his view of original sin from this translation. However, in his view, this translation has been abandoned by most scholars, who favour ‘because all sinned’ instead of ‘in whom all sinned’.

Gulley’s observation is in harmony with Rodriguez (2011) who states: ‘The translation “in whom [Adam] all sinned” is today rejected based on linguistic grounds’. Rodriguez argues that the preposition used is not ἐν (in) but ἐπί (on; for) and the possible antecedent of the noun, ‘one man’, is too far away (ἐφ’ ὁ = ἐπί ὁ). He asserts:

It is now recognized that ἐφ’ ὁ is functioning as a conjunction and that it could mean ‘for this reason that, because’, in a causal sense (cf. 2 Cor. 5:4; Phil. 3:12; 4:10). In that case Paul would be saying that humans die not only because of Adam’s sin but also because they themselves sinned (Rodriguez 2011).

On the other hand, Stuhlmacher (1994:86) contends:

Paul only intends to refer to the fact that death has overtaken all people because they all have sinned (in their own way). For him, sin is at the same time one's fate and one's act, for which one is responsible...With and since Adam, death and sin are inescapable. No person can avoid them.

ἐφ' ὃ (because) could also be functioning as the equivalent of a consecutive conjunction, which can be translated as 'so that, with the result that' (Fitzmyer 1993:416). In that case one could interpret the text that, through Adam death has reached every human being, with the result that they all commit sinful acts (cf. Schreiner 1998:274-277). This view, according to Rodriguez (2011), seems to fit the context.

What is more significant than this translation, nevertheless, is the immediate context (Gulley 2012:160). In Gulley's view, the next two verses, those that follow Romans 5:12, speak of death reigning even before the law, from the time of Adam to Moses (Rom 5:13-14). Thus, it can be argued that death reigned from the first sin of Adam and through all human history (Gulley 2012:160). It is Gulley's contention that the reign of death is linked to its initiation in Adam rather than to subsequent sin, as he asserts: 'Within this context the words 'all sinned' are an ingressive aorist tense, meaning Adam's first sin began the process which has continued throughout (διέρχομαι) history. His first sin began the reign of death' (Gulley 2012:160). Gulley is also in accord with Moo (1996:332) who avers: 'In vv.13-14, then, Paul was reasserting the universality of death in the face of an objection to the effect that his own emphasis on the law as bringing wrath (4:15) would imply the absence of death in the absence of Torah'.

According to Gulley (2012:160), the fact that Paul singled out one period of human history – from Adam to Moses – indicates that he was not concerned with hereditary sin, which is a central problem in most imputation theories. His focus is on the super-abounding grace of Jesus in spite of the reign of sin (Gulley 2012:160). Adam initiated the sin situation from which depravity and death result. Although death is not a punishment for Adam's

sin, it is a consequence of his sin: 'Adam's sin gave humans a tendency to sin, a leaning toward sin, which is in the very nature of humans at birth. Human nature has certain propensities as a result of Adam's broken relationship with God' (Gulley 2012:160).

There is a clear indication in Gulley's writings that he does not agree with the imputation theory of sin. He asserts that the first Adam did not impute to humans, condemnation, guilt, punishment, or sin – he did, instead, pass on a tendency to sin, because he led humans into a broken relationship with God (Gulley 2012:160). In his view, '[a]ll sins issue from this state of sin into which humans are born' (Gulley 2012:160).

That guilt and sin cannot be imputed or transmitted from one generation to the next is supported by Knight (2008:34) in this insightful statement: 'While guilt and sin cannot be transmitted from one generation to the next, the inbuilt tendency or propensity to sin can. That inborn inclination to sin (the carnal or fleshly mind [Rom. 8:7]) remains the primary tendency in an individual until reversed by the conversion or born-from-above experience'.

It is important to observe that Gulley uses the term 'imputation', while Knight uses the term 'transmission'. However, both scholars imply that sin does not pass from one generation to the next – in fact, it is *condemnation, guilt, punishment, and sin*. In other words, Adam's descendants are not condemned for the actual sin of Adam – they are not guilty because of Adam's sin and will not be punished because of Adam's sin, because Adam's sin is not their sin. As both Gulley and Knight put it, what passes to Adam's posterity is the tendency to sin. What passes to Adam's posterity is sin as nature and not the actual sin that Adam committed by violating God's law. The condemnation that humans receive, is not because of the actual sin of Adam, but because of the tendency or propensity or natural bent to sin, and this is tenable, because of the fact that all humans are related to Adam in a way in which they cannot escape the consequences of Adam's sin.

Faulkner (1921:280) summarises the biblical teaching of original sin when he writes that 'original sin means that the parents of our race by voluntary transgression received a

wrong bent which by natural laws they transmitted to their offspring'. Gulley's view is in harmony with Faulkner's. With this understanding of sin in mind, it is correct to say that a baby 'is a sinner in the sense that it is born with a tendency to choose sin as soon as it is old enough to do so' (Knight 2008:34). A baby is not a sinner in the sense that he/she consciously sins as a baby, for before the age of responsibility a baby does not know the concept of right and wrong.

According to Gulley (2012:160), in his parallel passage to Romans 5, Paul compared death as a result of Adam's sin to resurrection as a result of Jesus' death (1 Cor 15:21):

Both death and life come from one 'man', and this means that what Adam gifted the race is cancelled by what Christ provisionally gifted the race. Because of Adam's sin, humans are born to die (first death). Because of their own sins, humans need to be born again to avoid the final judgment death (John 3:5) (Gulley 2012:160).

Gulley finds another important insight in the meaning of Romans 5 in the comparison of its parallel statements. He asserts: 'The verse 12 and verse 17 in Romans 5 speak of death being passed on, and verses 18-19 speak of Adam's sin constituting his descendants as sinners' (Gulley 2012:160-161).

It has been opined by Gulley (2012:161) that a person is constituted to be a sinner, because of the death that is passed on. This appears to be true, in his view, because both sin and death refer to the broken relationship with God that necessitates a Saviour. Gulley observes that the idea that Adam's sin affects the race, is mentioned five times in Romans 5:15-19 (Gulley 2012:161). He advises: 'It is important to realize that the comparisons in this passage are between Adam and Jesus (three times) and not between Adam and his posterity. Paul's focus was on Jesus' super-abounding salvation in view of Adam's fall and its effects' (Gulley 2012:161).

Gulley (2012:161) opines that, when interpreting Romans 5, we need to follow the corresponding phrases. This view is also suggested by Davidson (1981:299-304). Gulley

asserts that there are three types of corresponding phrases: 1) the ὡς (ὥσπερ)...οὕτως, or 'as...so' phrases in verses 12, 18-19, and 21; 2) the οὐχ ὡς...οὕτως or 'as...so' phrases in verses 15-16; and 3) the εἰ...πολλῶ μᾶλλον, or 'if...much more' phrases in verses 15b and 17 (Gulley 2012:161). The first group has a correspondence of similarities. In this regard, Gulley remarks: '[A]s sin entered the world, so death passed to all humankind. As one offense brought all condemnation, so one act brought all justification/life (potentially); and as from one disobedience many were constituted sinners, so by one obedience many were constituted righteous' (Gulley 2012:161).

Gulley (2012:161) contends that the 'many' in these two verses are to be understood as equivalent to 'all' as indicated in Romans 5:15, that many died because of Adam's sin, whereas, in Romans 5:12, Paul stated that death passed to all from Adam's sin.

It has been suggested by Gulley (2012:161) that the second group of corresponding phrases is a correspondence of opposites. In these phrases, Jesus' gift was not like Adam's sin; while condemnation came from Adam's one sin, justification comes to humans after many sins, which are the sins of Adam and those of his posterity. Gulley observes that, in this passage, 'condemnation' (κατάκριμα) is not to be understood as imputed punishment, but imputed tendency to sin (Gulley 2012:161). Considering what has been stated previously, it can be argued that, in Gulley's view, punishment cannot be imputed to others, while a tendency to sin can.

The third group, according to Gulley (2012:161), builds upon the second group by stressing that Jesus' gift is much more than Adam's sin. Paul's focus of 'much more' is mentioned five times in Romans 5:9, 10, 15, 17, and 20. In this light, he states:

From these corresponding phrases it is clear that (1) Adam and Christ are similar in gifting the race apart from human works, and (2) dissimilar in that all humans receive the gift from Adam whereas the gift from Christ is received only by those who accept it. Furthermore, (3) Christ's gift of the state of justification by faith in

the new birth more than makes up for Adam's gift of the state of sin and death to the race at birth (Gulley 2012:161).

Perhaps it is important to indicate that the soteriological context of Romans 5 is seen in verses 1-11 where Paul gloried in the super-abounding salvation through the life and death of Jesus (Gulley 2012:161). In this passage, the focus is on justification by faith, not on sanctification. After arguing convincingly in the first four chapters that justification is not by works of the law, but by faith in the gift given by God through Jesus, Paul, in Romans 5:12 began: 'Therefore [as a summation of what precedes], just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people', so 'death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam (v.14, NIV)'. In verses 18-19, Paul continued by comparing the results of the one sin of Adam to the gift of righteousness to all humans (potentially) through the one gift of Jesus (Gulley 2012:162).

It must be pointed out that Romans 5 refers to a 'gift' (χάρισμα; δωρεά) in verses 15 and 16 (Gulley 2012:162). However, gifts are never earned, and this, according to Gulley, is the crucial argument in Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Gulley argues: 'Justification is not by works; neither Jesus' justification nor Adam's sin state depend upon human works. The two Adams give to the race without regard for human works, whether good or bad' (Gulley 2012:162). In this light, Gulley (2012:162) concludes:

So, death comes to the whole race not when each one sins personally, but when each is born. Furthermore, in the whole context of Scripture, the gifts of both Adams are received at birth: sin as broken relationship (tendency to sin) at one's first birth, and justification when one is born again.

According to Gulley (2012:162), terms such as 'constituted sinners' and 'condemnation' are often misrepresented: 'Scripture knows of no imputation of sin, condemnation, punishment, or guilt'. He argues: 'These terms are simply ways of expressing our broken

relationship with God which has its source in the original sin of Adam. This is the essence of the tendency to sin into which all of us are born' (Gulley 2012:162).

At this point I need to ask some questions, which will later help me to evaluate Gulley's understanding of the nature of original sin (tendency to sin), and how it is transmitted from Adam to his posterity: Why is it incorrect to say that all human beings sinned in Adam? Does the Bible not teach about the solidarity of the human race, implying that original sin could be transmitted on the basis of that solidarity? If, as Gulley points out, a broken relationship (tendency to sin) becomes our lot at the point of each individual's first birth is true, how should we view those who die in the womb before they are even born? In other words, is a tendency to sin not the lot of every person right at conception? Does justification only come to us when we believe as individuals, or was the human race already collectively justified in Jesus at the cross? As it was asked previously, if a tendency to sin comes to every person who is born the first time, did it also affect Jesus Christ, since He was born in this world the first time? If it did not affect Him, how did He escape it?

Gulley also speaks of humans being self-centred at birth. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **9.3.7 Self-centred Sinners at Birth**

Having noted, as it has been indicated above, that humans are born separated from God, Gulley (2012:162) argues: 'If humans are born separated from God, then the centre of their life is not God but self'. He contends that children are born selfish, being in line with Heppenstall (1964:121) who asserts: 'Every child is born with an impossible self-centeredness. This Biblical truth is the primary fact of all human life at its beginning'.

Gulley (2012:162) postulates: 'Inherent propensities, or an evil, corrupt nature are both ways to describe a broken relationship with God'. Just as Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), Adam 'begot a son in his own likeness, after his image (Gen. 5:3)' (Gulley 2012:162). The significance of this change is that Seth was a son of the fallen Adam – he was born in sin (Gulley 2012:162). It should be noted that while



Genesis 5:3 mentions only Seth, every descendant of Adam, including Cain and Abel were begotten in Adam's 'own likeness, after his image'. It would appear that Seth is singled out in Genesis 5:3 because the author is giving the genealogy of Adam (cf. Gen 5:1-32), which excludes Cain and Abel, who are already mentioned in Genesis 4. Children are born in the likeness and image of their parents, which means that they receive from their parents the tendency to sin, which Adam gifted the human race. Thus, Gulley also singles out Seth, because Genesis 5:3 refers to him and not to Cain and Abel. However, he does include every other descendant of Adam in his view of how Adam's sin affected all his descendants.

Gulley's observation corresponds to that of Knight (2008:31) who, commenting on Genesis 5:3, states: 'Here a distinction is implied between the unfallen Adam having been created in the image of God and his son being born after Adam's post-fall likeness'. He reports: 'The theme surfaces again in Genesis 8:21, in which God claimed at the conclusion of the flood story that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"' (Gulley 2012:162). In this light, Gulley (2012:162) asserts: 'So sin is more than just an outward act. It precedes the act; sin is also about motive, the tendency to sin, and the broken relationship with God rooted in self-centeredness'.

The fact that all people are sinners at birth, born separated from God, centred in the self, with a tendency to sin, has implications. Gulley (2012:163) responds:

When we grasp the utter desperate condition of the race, we better appreciate how great is the gift of salvation. Because (1) Scripture teaches the depths of sin, that humans are sinners before they sin, and do not need to sin in order to become sinners; because (2) humans are born sinners due to Adam's broken relationship with God which was passed on to his posterity, all are born needing a Saviour.

It is when humans see themselves as sinners, not only in what they do, but also by nature, that they realise their great need of a saviour. Paul had the correct understanding of the

nature of sin, which led to his desperate cry: 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' (Rom 7:24).

Several other scholars understand the nature of sin just as Gulley does. They also believe that what one believes about sin, influences the way one understands salvation. Thus, it can be argued that the way in which one understands the nature of sin, influences the position one takes about substitutionary atonement. The view of sin that one holds, also determines one's view of Jesus Christ's human nature.

Mowrer (1961:40), a psychiatrist, for example, puts the issue succinctly when he writes: 'Just so long as we deny the reality of sin, we cut ourselves, it seems, from the possibility of radical redemption [recovery]'. When we act like a Pharisee by refusing to accept our total sinful condition, we tell God that He has lied about our true state as human beings born after sin entered this world. This implies that Jesus would not be the Saviour from sin in the sense that the Bible puts it (Matt 1:21; John 1:29; 4:42; 1 Pet 2:24).

Knight (2008:28) conveys: 'The apostle Paul helps us see that a correct understanding of sin is not only all important for grasping the human problem, but that it is also the crucial element in understanding salvation'. He then argues: 'It is important to recognize that an inadequate doctrine of sin will of necessity lead to an inadequate doctrine of salvation' (Knight 2008:29). Thus, it is not possible for one to comprehend and appreciate what God did through Jesus in providing salvation, if one does not have a clear biblical understanding of sin. For this reason, Knight avers: 'Whether we like it or not, recognize it or not, or confess it or not, every person has a "bent" to evil that needs correcting – even if that inclination is thoroughly camouflaged by Christian pedigree and outward goodness' (Knight 2008:35).

The point to note is that sin is so sinful that it sometimes deceives us into thinking that we are so righteous that we do not need any help from God. Our seeming outward goodness may lie to us that we are not as sinful as the Bible suggests we are. The Bible, however,

states: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' (Jer 17:9).

Vick (1983:86) observes: 'To recognize that we are sinners means that we recognize there is a power that lords it over us and prevents us from being what God intends us to be. That power is the power of sin'. The first thing toward a full liberation is that we recognise that sin has taken away from us the holiness, which God endowed us with at creation. While some elements of the image of God are still in us, we are in the image of our sinful parents. There is a power of sin in us that we cannot deliver ourselves from.

It is generally agreed by scholars that the universality of sin suggests that there is in human beings an inborn tendency or bias toward evil that precedes the exercise of freedom to sin. In this light, Knudson (1933:263) opines: 'If sin is due to free choice, there would seem to be no reason why it should be universal. Its universality suggests an element of necessity, an inborn tendency or bias toward evil, that precedes the exercise of freedom'.

In summation it can be concluded that, for Gulley, sin is not only a personal act against God's revealed will, it is also a tendency toward evil. Because of Adam's sin, humans are born with a tendency to commit sin. Humans are born spiritually dead and they die physically because of both Adam's sin (for those who die before reaching the age of responsibility) and their own personal sins (for those who reach the age of accountability). Adam gave the gift of a broken relationship with God to the human race, which makes humans commit personal sins. Before one breaks God's law, one first loses trust in God and rebels against Him in one's heart. In this regard, Gulley follows the lead of Knight (2008:39), who writes:

Eve sinned when she threw out God's word to her and accepted Satan's suggestions. She sinned when she told God to get lost so that she could do her own thing. And she sinned when she rebelled against God and put her will at the centre of her life, loving her own opinion more than His.

According to Knight, Eve sinned when she threw out God's word, which clearly stated the penalty for eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (cf. Gen 2:16-17). Eve believed and accepted Satan's suggestion that she would not really die, but become as wise as God Himself. Satan suggested that the reason God did not allow her to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was because He did not want her to become as wise as He is (cf. Gen 3:4, 5). Eve disbelieved God, and the result was that she sinned against Him by disobeying Him. Thus, according to Knight, to sin is to believe and accept Satan's lie against God's word. One sins when one tells God to get lost in order to do one's own thing. Another way to put it, is to say that one sins when one rebels against God and puts one's own opinion at the centre of one's life, loving one's own opinion more than God's revealed will.

It must be emphasised that, from Adam, humans receive both a spiritual and physical death. All humans who do not reach the time of Jesus' coming, will not escape the physical death. It has already been pointed out that all humans are born spiritually dead. Resurrection from this spiritual death comes to those who accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. This has been made possible by Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. Those who will escape judgement (or eternal) death are those who receive resurrection from the spiritual death through the new-birth experience.

According to Gulley, condemnation, guilt, punishment, and sin, is never imputed from one person to another. Thus, humans are condemned, not because of the actual sin of Adam in which they never personally participated, but because Adam gifted them with a tendency to sin. They are also condemned for their own personal sins and are not guilty because of Adam's sin – they are only guilty of the personal sins they have committed. Humans will be punished for rejecting Jesus and hence remaining in a state of alienation from God and breaking His law. Adam's actual sin of eating the forbidden fruit is not imputed to humans, it is the consequences of that act that humans receive.

After this quite comprehensive review of Gulley's views of sin, his view of the humanity of Jesus Christ will be discussed, with the question: In light of what sin did to humanity, what kind of human nature did Jesus Christ assume?

#### 9.4 Jesus Christ's Humanity

Gulley's writings make it very clear that Jesus was indeed human. Perhaps the question has to do with what kind of humanity Jesus took. Was it a post-fall or a pre-fall humanity, or was it neither a post-fall nor a pre-fall humanity?

Quoting John 1:1 and 1:14, Gulley (2012:421) asserts: 'The word "flesh" (σάρξ) here leaves no doubt that Jesus was human...What utter condescension: the eternal, infinite Creator became flesh, a helpless baby, in the battlefield of the cosmic controversy'. In Gulley's opinion, 'Paul describes the incarnation as a descent from being God to becoming human, and even descending further to death for humans' (Gulley 2012:423). According to Philippians 2:5-8, Jesus Christ was 'in every nature [μορφῆ] God' and so did not 'consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage' [ἄρπαγμόν]; but Jesus emptied [ἐκένωσεν] himself, 'taking the very nature [μορφήν] of a servant [δούλου], being made [γενόμενος] in human likeness [ὁμοιώματι]'. Gulley (2012:423) elaborates on the meaning of this:

To say that the pre-existent Christ was in the form of God doesn't mean a mere outward appearance (that would need a different Greek word *schema* [σχῆμα]; see 1 Cor. 7:31; 2 Cor. 11:13-15), but means His essential nature was divine. That's why He didn't need to grasp at being God (the aim of the controversy against God) because He was God.

Gulley adds: 'The "form of a slave" replaces the "form of God" in that He became essentially human in nature, meaning He lived on earth as a human, not as God' (Gulley 2012:423). According to Gulley, '[t]his required a creative act, the incarnation of the Creator-Jesus to become a part of His creation, and to live as a created being like any other human' (Gulley 2012:423-424). He adds: 'It should be noted that this *replacing* of

His *essential nature*, from divine to human, in no way lessened the fact He was God and Man united together in one Person' (Gulley 2012:424; emphasis added), and, 'The emptying of Himself means He chose not to live as God, even though He was also God; instead, He chose to live as a human because He was also human' (Gulley 2012:424). Insightfully, he contends: 'In His pre-existence Jesus Christ related to creation as its Creator and ruled over the universe as a part of the Trinity. But in the incarnation Jesus entered a new relationship: He came to serve, even to be a slave, even to die!' (Gulley 2012:424).

As I noted earlier, there is no doubt that Gulley fully believes that when Jesus incarnated, He became a real human being. He was not only like a human being, He was a human being. Yet, while being human, He did not cease to be God. He only did not use His divinity to His own advantage and independently of the Father and the Holy Spirit. I now need to ask Gulley to clarify what He means when he refers to 'this *replacing* of His *essential nature*'. Was the incarnation the *replacing* of God's *essential nature*? There is a need to canvass this statement. In the meantime, I need to state that Gulley also speaks of the virgin birth, and so I will review what he says on this controversial topic.

#### **9.4.1 The Virgin Birth: One Human Parent, a Complete Male Child**

Mary's conception without a husband is recorded in two texts: Matthew 1:18-24 and Luke 1:26-38. It is probably implied in Galatians 4:4-5. The fact that the subject of the virgin birth is explicitly recorded in only two texts, however, does not suggest that it is not an important subject. As a matter of fact, it is a controversial subject.

Gulley (2012:424) argues: 'It was the eternal, self-existent second Person of the Trinity who came to planet earth, and was born as a human through Mary by the Holy Spirit'. He adds: 'The helpless baby was "God with us" (cf. Isa. 7:14). He was fully God and fully human' (Gulley 2012:424). In Gulley's opinion, '[t]his is the greatest miracle and the greatest mystery that confronts human understanding. We attempt to grasp the infinite wisdom of God with finite minds' (Gulley 2012:424). He admonishes that, like Moses before God in the burning bush, we are standing on holy ground (Ex 3:1-6) – for this reason we need to approach the subject of the incarnation with deep humility and total

dependence upon the Holy Spirit to enlighten us (Gulley 2012:424). Without humility on our part, we are likely to shipwreck our faith.

The incarnation is a subject that requires the wisdom of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-14; Col 2:2-3; 1 Cor 2:14). A divine revelation about the divinity of Jesus is given in Scripture. One example is Matthew 16:13-17. It must, however, be noted that many deny the virgin birth. This, according to Gulley (2012:425), should not come to us as a surprise, because it is a subject that can only be understood by Spirit-filled humans. He observes: 'The Jewish leaders of Jesus' time did not recognize Jesus as God, nor do liberal theologians today' (Gulley 2012:425).

According to Gulley (2012:425), it is not possible to simply deny the incarnation, for it is clearly revealed in Scripture: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made' (John 1:1-3); and 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). The angel Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to a son and 'He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest' (Luke 1:32a). Mary was assured that '[t]he Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you: therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Thus, it can be argued that 'Jesus Christ entered the human race as the Son of the Most High, the holy One' (Gulley 2012:425).

Gulley (2012:425) contends that 'Jesus Christ was God and Man. He wasn't one without the other. His divine nature was the same as it had always been from eternity. He was one with the Father and the Spirit'. In Gulley's view, there was no break in the relationship that had always existed in the Trinity, for only sin brings a broken relationship (Gulley 2012:425-426).

The author of the letter to the Hebrews argued that 'when He [Jesus] came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure”. Then I said, “Behold, I come – in the volume of the book it is written of me – to do your will, o God” (Heb. 10:5-7)’. In this light, Gulley (2012:426) asserts: ‘Christ came to do His Father’s will. Such a mission is the greatest revelation of His oneness with God, of His unbroken relationship with Him’. After quoting John 3:16, Gulley adds: ‘The Father gave (John 3:16), the Son was willing to come (Heb. 10:7), and He was born of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18)’ (Gulley 2012:425). He then argues: ‘All three members of the Trinity participated in the coming of Christ into the world. It was a divine mission to save humans from sin, to bring them abundant, everlasting life’ (Gulley 2012:425).

According to Gulley (2012:426), ‘The title “Son of God” is given to Christ because He was willing to become human. Christ is fully God, being self-existent as the “I am” passages declare’. He states:

He was not dependent upon the Father or upon the Holy Spirit for His eternal divine existence. He co-existed with them from eternity. He remained God throughout the incarnational process, and was born the God-Man. His deity didn’t change; rather, He was God throughout His incarnational life. He is God today and forever (Gulley 2012:426).

Gulley (2012:426) then asks: ‘So what does it mean that He became the Son of Man?’ In his view, ‘This is a crucial question that can only be properly understood if one keeps in mind [that] we are speaking about the One who is also the Son of God’ (Gulley 2012:425). ‘The God-Man’, Gulley opines, ‘is a union of two natures, the divine and the human’ (Gulley 2012:426). However, the God-Man is not two Persons – instead He is God who also became Man: ‘The Holy Spirit, in a miracle beyond human understanding, joined the two natures into one Person’ (Gulley 2012:426).

In the foregoing review, it is clear that Gulley does not venture into the intricacies of the science of human reproduction. In other words, he does not say how exactly it was that God was able to bring into existence a complete human being with only one human



parent. He is content to simply believe that God became a human being while remaining God. This was by the power of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed the virgin Mary. It was a mystery, which will remain so. There is no doubt, in Gulley's Christology, therefore, that Jesus Christ was a unique Person.

#### **9.4.2 Jesus Christ's Unique Nature**

According to Gulley (2012:426), '[i]t is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ that must be kept in mind as we grapple with the reality of a divine-human Person, for in the union of two natures we have one God-Man'. There are at least five ways, in Gulley's view, in which Jesus Christ was unique:

- (1) He lived before He was born a human, (2) He had no human father, (3) He was born of the Holy Spirit through a virgin, (4) He was the Son of the Most High, and (5) His birth was supernatural and His life impeccable. He was God with us in human form (Gulley 2012:426).

Some biblical texts call Jesus Christ the 'only begotten'. In this light, Gulley (2012:426) argues: 'Etymologically the Greek word μονογενής ("only begotten") comes from γίνομαι, not γεννάω, which means "to beget". The Greek word γίνομαι is derived from γένος, meaning "kind" or "species"' (Gulley 2012:426). Thus, it can be argued that μονογενής does not refer to 'only begotten' but to 'one of a kind', 'unique', 'unparalleled', and 'incomparable' (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) rather than 'sole descent', as in reference to the only son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:12), the only daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:42), and the only son of his father (Luke 8:42) (cf. Buchsel 1967:737-739). In his *Systematic Theology Vol. III*, Gulley (2012:427) states: 'I do not agree that Christ was a begotten Son in His pre-existence. Rather the incarnation is a new reality which is better described as unique rather than as "only begotten"'.

The noun μονογενής, as applied to Abraham's son, Isaac, refers to 'unique' son (Heb 11:17), not the sole son, for Ishmael was the firstborn son (Gulley 2012:427). Thus, 'Isaac

was the unique son, a miracle son of [Abraham], for Israel would come through his line' (Gulley 2012:426). Isaac was conceived after his mother had reached her menopause.

The two clauses, 'the Word was with God' and 'the Word was God' (John 1:1) speak of the equality (and distinction) between the Word and God (Gulley 2012:427). This means that the Word and God are co-eternal and co-equal, as members of the Trinity. Certainly, it was this Word who 'became flesh' (σὰρξ ἐγένετο). This verb is in the aorist tense, which refers to a completed action at one point in the past with reference to the incarnation (Gulley 2012:427). In this regard, 'Christ did not become flesh or a Son sometime in His pre-existence, for that was the time when He was an equal Person in the Trinity as God' (Gulley 2012:427). Gulley goes on: 'There is no hint of eternal Sonship or eternal subordination. The uniqueness of the incarnation doesn't detract from the equality of the Word with God, for it was this God, this Word, who became also human' (Gulley 2012:427).

It should be borne in mind that '[i]t is the God-Man who is unique and who is now referred to as the Son of God, through the mystery and miracle of the incarnation' (Gulley 2012:427). In other words, it is not the human Jesus who is unique, but the God-Man. God also became human, thereby forming the God-Man.

Gulley agrees with Morris (1995:93) who relates: 'We should not read too much into "only begotten". To English ears this sounds like a metaphysical relationship, but the Greek term means no more than "only", "unique"'. 'Only begotten' refers to the fact that the second Person of the Godhead incarnated and became the God-Man.

Tenney (1981:33) comments insightfully on John 1:1 and 14: 'Verse 1 states that the Word "was", referring to its permanent condition or state, while v.14 states that the Word "became" flesh, involving a change in state'. This comment is well supported by Gulley as a truth reflecting of what Scripture teaches: 'Jesus Christ as the God-Man was not only unique in Himself, but He came with a unique mission: to save humans and reveal God' (Gulley 2012:427). Gulley asserts that no one else had done what Jesus Christ came to

do, nor could they do it. In his view, only God can reveal God, and He did it through being human (Gulley 2012:427). Jesus Christ is the only means for human salvation as the only Mediator between God and humans and He is the only one who can resolve the cosmic controversy by revealing the truth about God, as Gulley argues: ‘The uniqueness of this Person and the uniqueness of His mission need to be factored into our understanding of His humanity’ (Gulley 2012:427). This leads to a review of Gulley’s view of Jesus Christ as Son of Man.

### **9.4.3 Jesus Christ as Son of Man**

What I may call Gulley’s bold and unequivocal statement of faith, reads as follows: ‘Christ was eternally divine as God, and was miraculously born into this world through the Holy Spirit, *receiving humanity through the Spirit’s work in Mary*’ (Gulley 2012:427; emphasis added). He further asserts: ‘Credit for Christ’s birth rests fully in God’s Spirit – Mary was only a willing means. Just as our salvation rests fully in Christ, so Christ’s birth as a human, rests fully in the Holy Spirit’ (Gulley 2012:427-428).

Commenting on the angel’s statement to Joseph that ‘[Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins’ (Matt 1:21), Gulley (2012:428) observes: ‘There is no hint in Scripture that Mary should be honoured for participating in saving the world as Roman Catholic dogma teaches’. Thus, in Gulley’s opinion, Mary is not a co-saviour of the human race. Her role was simply to conceive, bear the Son of Man, and take care of Him.

It is important to observe that Gulley also speaks of Jesus Christ as the second Adam.

### **9.4.4 Jesus Christ as the Second Adam**

Adam and Jesus are compared in two texts: Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. Based on these texts, Gulley (2012:430) proposes: ‘The sin problem on planet earth began through Eve, but as the head of humanity, Adam was the one whose capitulation affected the race. Adam’s sin is passed on through his children so that each is born with a sinful nature’.

Another way to explain this is that all humans are born with a propensity to sin, because they have inherited a sinful nature due to the first sin of Adam. It basically means that each person is born with the need for salvation before they ever sin, for sin is more than an act – it is in our nature (Gulley 2012:430). In Gulley's view, this explains why 'death reigned from the time of Adam (Rom. 5:14a, NIV), for it was Adam's sin that brought condemnation (Rom. 5:16, NIV)' (Gulley 2012:430). Another way to put it is that 'by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man' (Rom 5:17a, NIV).

Since sin is more than an act, Jesus did not come to save humans only from sinning, but from their sinful nature as well (Gulley 2012:431). This statement is important for the purposes of this study, because one area of controversy regarding the human nature of Jesus Christ has to do with how He dealt with sin. Therefore, I will get back to it when evaluating Gulley's Christology.

The comparison between the first Adam and the second Adam reveals that the consequence of the first Adam's one sin is death (Gulley 2012:431). In this light, he asserts: 'The one act of sin brought death to all humans, whereas the one act of Jesus' death brought life to all humans who will accept the gift (John 3:16). Both Adams gift the race, one with death and the other with life' (Gulley 2012:431). It must be observed that both gifts are eternal; humans would die forever if Jesus had not paid sin's wages and set His followers free to live forever (Gulley 2012:431).

In what follows, I will review Gulley's view of what he calls the 'incarnational nature'.

#### **9.4.5 Jesus Christ's Incarnational Nature**

According to Gulley (2012:431), 'Jesus Christ crossed the sin-caused chasm between God and humans. The Son of God reached out from the inner relationship of the Trinity to come to humanity'. He adds: 'Like a mighty bridge, He spanned the space separating the eternal God and rebel humans (that space is caused by sin even though God is omnipresent)' (Gulley 2012:431). However, even as God became incarnate on earth, He remained the sinless God, as Gulley argues: 'He did not change in His mission to save

sinner. He remained sinless through the incarnational process (He did not need an immaculate mother any more than He needed humans to help Him save humans)' (Gulley 2012:431).

Several NT texts reveal that Jesus was sinless. The following examples will suffice: The angel Gabriel told Mary that 'that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35b) – according to Gulley, no other woman has given birth to a holy baby, who is the Son of God (Gulley 2012:431); the reason for Jesus' becoming human was to do His Father's will (Heb 10:5-7); as His mission here on earth was coming to an end, Jesus related: 'I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love' (John 15:10); as He prayed to the Father for His disciples, He stated: 'I have glorified you on earth. I have finished the work which you have given me to do' (John 17:4); Peter said to Jesus: 'You are the Holy One of God' (John 6:69b); referring to Isaiah 53:9, Peter wrote that Jesus 'committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth' (1 Pet 2:22); the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews reported that Jesus 'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15b); Jesus Christ 'knew no sin' (2 Cor 5:21a); and John said that Jesus came 'to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin' (1 John 3:5).

It was earlier noted that Gulley considers these texts as clear evidence that Jesus Christ was sinless. It is not yet known in Gulley's works, however, whether Jesus was sinless in His human nature or in performance. It appears that Gulley does not distinguish texts that refer to Jesus' sinless divine nature from those that relate to His sinless performance. This point will be canvassed when evaluating his Christology.

Jesus Christ is said to have been sent in the *likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom 8:3). Therefore, there is a need for the purposes of this study, to review what Gully says on this subject.

#### **9.4.6 Jesus Christ in the Likeness of Sinful Flesh**

Gulley (2012:432) asserts that there is a general agreement that the Son of God also became the Son of Man. This view is in harmony with Erickson's explanation as to why scholars do not treat the topic of Jesus' humanity as much as they do His divinity. Erickson

(1991:14) explains: 'The reason the humanity of Jesus, for example, does not receive separate treatment is that it is not an issue severely contested in contemporary Christology; for that matter, it is not contested at all'. It must be noted, however, that in the SDA Christology, the humanity of Jesus is severely contested. However, the question to ask is: What does '*becoming Man*' mean? In other words, what kind of humanity did Jesus assume? Schleiermacher ([1830] 1999:413-417) argues that it was a sinless nature. On the other hand, Barth (1958:481) contends that it was a sinful nature. However, what is Gulley's position? He responds: 'To answer these questions, we will consider whether Christ's humanity was like or unlike ours' (Gulley 2012:432).

#### **9.4.6.1 Like and Unlike Fallen Human Nature**

In his book, *Christ Our Substitute*, Gulley (1982:33) asks: 'Jesus had either (1) unfallen human nature, such as Adam possessed prior to the Fall, or (2) fallen human nature. Which is correct?' He responds to his own question: 'He took both. For Christ took the spiritual nature of man before the Fall, and the physical nature of man after the Fall' (Gulley 1982:33).

According to Gulley (2012:433), '[t]he meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represents the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam'. In this light, he states: 'It is more correct to say that Jesus' human nature possessed aspects of both the pre-fall and post-fall human nature. His humanity was both like and unlike ours' (Gulley 2012:433).

It appears that Gulley agrees with Dederen (2000:164) who argues: 'His humanity did not correspond to Adam's humanity before the Fall, nor in every respect to Adam's humanity after the Fall'. This seems to be the view held by a good number of SDA theologians today, for it is promoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Gulley (2012:433) contends that 'Christ was like us in every way except for sin'. In his view, texts such as John 1:14b; Luke 1:35; 1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and 1 Peter 2:22a confirm that Jesus was sinless.

Gulley (2012:433) suggests that the humanity of Jesus could be thought of as standing half-way between pre-fall Adam and post-fall Adam (or fallen humans). While Adam was at the level of pre-fall human nature, Jesus was positioned below that level, because He received 'innocent infirmities' (human limitations except sin) from the fall of Adam (Gulley 2012:433). Again, Jesus is placed above the level occupied by fallen humans, because He did not receive the evil propensities from the fall of Adam that the rest of fallen humans receive (Gulley 2012:433). Thus, it can be argued that 'Christ is neither like the pre-fall Adam nor like the post-fall human race. He occupies a place between the two' (Gulley 2012:433). Gulley adds: 'This is why it is correct to say that He received some of the post-fall nature (innocent infirmities), but not the full post-fall nature (sinful propensities). He received the weakness but not the wickedness from the fall. He was deprived but not depraved' (Gulley 2012:433).

Gulley's note that, 'although Christ is the Second Adam, He is not to be identified fully with either the pre-fall or post-fall views of human nature' (Gulley 2012:434), needs to be unpacked further. Gulley states: 'Whereas the first Adam sinned, the second Adam didn't sin. So where [the first] Adam failed, the second Adam succeeded. In so doing He won the right to become the new leader of the human race' (Gulley 2012:434). In Gulley's view, both the pre-fall Adam and Jesus had a sinless life, and in this respect, they are the same. He, however, observes: 'But there is a difference: Whereas Adam had a human nature free from the consequences of sin, Christ took upon Himself a human nature that was weakened by the long heredity of sin, even though He did not actually sin' (Gulley 2012:434).

Gulley wants his readers to understand what he is trying to say. As such he labours to clarify what he means:

In other words, the first Adam was created by the pre-incarnate Christ as a sinless human in the image of God. But as God became the second Adam, He entered human creation and assumed human nature with its damaged image of God, even though He did not take its depravity (Gulley 2012:434).

What is Gulley really conveying? It seems that he is not content with the clarification he has already made. He therefore elaborates:

So, in human nature, Christ was unlike the pre-fall Adam and unlike the post-fall Adam, even though there are similarities. Unlike the post-fall Adam, Christ was the sinless Son of God on mission to save sinners (their sinful natures and acts), and did not participate in sin, either in nature or acts (Gulley 2012:434).

Gulley (2012:434) further argues: 'A doctor does not need to have cancer in order to save cancer patients. Nor does a sinless Son of God need to take on sin within His nature in order to save a sinful nature'. This is so because 'sin, whether in nature or acts, participates in a broken relationship with God. Christ didn't come to enter such a broken relationship but to restore it' (Gulley 2012:434).

Gulley (2012:434; emphasis added) contends: 'This means the phrase *the unassumed is unredeemed* (taught by Eastern theology from Athanasius onward) doesn't do justice to the uniqueness of the humanity of Jesus'. He asks: 'If Christ assumed a sinful nature, how could He be a sinless Saviour?' (Gulley 2012:434). His response is: 'We must be guided by the Son of God's reason for crossing the chasm between sinless God and sinful humanity. He came to save humans. He didn't cross the chasm to become a part of the sin problem – but to solve it' (Gulley 2012:434). With this statement in mind, Gulley (2012:435) states: 'This leads us to a hermeneutical principle: God's mission must determine the extent of His identity with fallen human nature'. It would appear, in Gulley's view, that Jesus assumed a weak human nature. In this light, he relates: 'Getting tired, needing sleep, getting hungry, and so on were not problems for the pre-fall Adam, but they were for the post-fall Adam. Sin in nature and acts was a problem for the first Adam, but not for the second Adam' (Gulley 2012:435).

What is Gulley's point of contention? What really does he want his readers to get from his arguments? His point then, which he calls the bottom line, is: 'The Son of God did not break His relationship with God and humans in order to restore a broken relationship



between God and humans. His mission was to restore and re-create the image of God in humanity, not to lose the image of God Himself' (Gulley 2012:435).

There is no doubt about Gulley's view of Jesus' human nature. In his view, Jesus assumed a nature which was free from sin. Apart from that, Jesus lived a life free from sin. In this light, Gulley (2012:435) opines: 'He identified with fallen human nature in every way except in sin in nature and life. He came to save humans from their sinful nature and sinful acts, and to do so He was necessarily sinless in nature and in acts'.

It is Gulley's contention that the fact that Jesus was sinless in nature and in acts made Him say: 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me' (John 14:30b, KJV, NKJV, NASB). In Gulley's view, '[t]hese translations are true to the Greek "has nothing in me" (ἐν ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔχει οὐδέν), and penetrate to the inner reality, whereas "no power over me" (RSV), "no hold on me" (NIV), or "no rights over me" (NEB) speak of the consequences of Satan's having "nothing in me"' (Gulley 2012:435). No wonder that John wrote of Jesus that 'He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin' (1 John 3:5). Gulley conveys: 'This verse speaks of Christ's sinless nature in His mission to save humans from their sinful natures, for sin issues out of a nature of sin, the nature in which every human is born since the Fall' (Gulley 2012:435).

Fact is that the Bible does not place any saving value on our first birth (Gulley 2012:435): Jesus made this very clear to Nicodemus when He told him that no person can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again (John 3:3). In this light, Gulley reiterates:

Jesus alone did not need the new birth – which says that something about His birth puts Him in a class by Himself. Just as all other humans need the new birth, so the saved will have their corruptible natures changed to incorruptible natures in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15). Yet no biblical verse speaks of Christ's need for either the new birth or a change of nature at His resurrection (Gulley 2012:435).

Since Gulley suggests that we have to look at Jesus' humanity from the perspective of His mission, it is important that I review what he says on Jesus' incarnational mission.

#### **9.4.7 Jesus Christ's incarnational Mission**

There were definitely some very important reasons for Jesus Christ's coming to earth. In this light, Gulley (2012:435) states that Jesus did not come to this world to have a vacation – He came at enormous cost to save a lost world. It is his contention that, if Jesus had not come, no human could be redeemed. Jesus Christ came on a long, lonely journey to do for humans what they could not do for themselves. Jesus also came for an on-looking universe, to reveal to created beings in this world and beyond what God is like, and forever prove that the cosmic charge against God is false. Jesus Christ wanted all intelligent created beings to see the devil exposed for what he is, and God revealed for who He is (Gulley 2012:435).

It is written in Scripture that Jesus is the head of the church (cf. e.g. 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18). However, Gulley (2012:436) suggests that Jesus did not come just to be the head of the church, but to be the head of humankind. This view is in line with the view of Wesley (1998:55), stating that Jesus Christ came to be 'Head of mankind'. Gulley (2012:436) contends that 'Christ didn't come just to reconcile the elect, for "in Christ [ἐν Χριστῷ] God was reconciling the world [κόσμον καταλλάσσων] to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19a, ESV)'. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ tasted 'death for everyone' (Heb 2:9), 'so redemption was provided for every human, even though most turn it down' (Gulley 2012:436). God's love is inclusive, not exclusive, but humans exclude His love from their lives and with sadness He allows them the freedom to do so, for true love respects the desires of others, even though it must hurt God far more than humans will ever understand (Gulley 2012:436). Just as Adam was the representative of the race, so Jesus as the second Adam is the representative of the race (Rom 5:17-19; 1 Cor 15:22) (Gulley 2012:436).

We need to delve deeper into the review of Gulley's reasons for Jesus Christ's coming to this world, which is what I will do in what follows.

#### **9.4.7.1 Jesus Christ Came to Reveal God**

Gulley asserts that the integrity of God is on the line in the cosmic controversy as it requires proof to convince rebels that the Lawgiver is not to be blamed for the breaking of His law (Gulley 2012:436). Although God could solve this issue through Christians who love Him and keep His commandments (John 14:15), even the best Christian has sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). Thus, there was only one sure way to reveal Himself and that was through the second Person of the Godhead. Jesus had to assume a human nature, live a perfect life by depending on external power, which was also available to any other human being (Gulley 2012:436). It is thus argued that through His life of unwavering obedience, Jesus Christ proved that God's law can be kept, and in so doing, showed that God is just to have such commandments (Gulley 2012:436). The implication of this is that there is no excuse for breaking the law. Through His sinless life, the Son of Man revealed the Father (Gulley 2012:436).

Gulley (2012:436) contends that the Name of God represents His character, so when Jesus said to the Father: 'I have manifested your name' (ὄνομα; John 17:6a, NKJV), He implied that 'I have revealed you' (John 17:6a, NIV). In Gulley's view, the glory of God represents His character: '[I]t is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory [δόξα; character] of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6)'. Gulley (2012:436) adds: 'The same idea about *name* representing *character* is found in John 1:12'. This is confirmed by 1 John 5:20: 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true... This is the true God'. Jesus also said: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9b). However, Jesus also came to experience human life.

#### **9.4.7.2 Jesus Christ Came to Experience Human Life**

A survey of Gulley's writings on this topic reveals that he believes that it was necessary for God to become a human being in order to experience human life. Since Jesus Christ was the pre-existent and self-existent God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, He equally shared in the absolute authority and power that

is resident in the Godhead (Gulley 2012:437). It can be argued, therefore, that after creating intelligent beings, it was part of being God for Jesus Christ to give orders in love and be obeyed (Gulley 2012:437). Gulley argues: 'After rebellion entered the universe, rebels would naturally say that it is the authority of God – His willingness to give orders – that poses a problem for intelligent created beings. Rebels would say that God doesn't know what it is like to live as a created being' (Gulley 2012:437). In other words, rebel angels would say that God is not in touch with those He created. It is for this reason that Deism – the belief that God created the universe but left it to run on its own – is an inadequate view of God (Gulley 2012:437). If the second Person of the Godhead had not come to reveal God, the devil would have worked through the fallen human beings to cast a shadow of doubt on God's creation.

The 'Classical theology', just like deism, 'didn't help with its view of an aloof God – a God who is immutable, impassible, removed beyond creation' (Gulley 2012:437). This argument naturally comes: 'After all, how can a timeless, unchangeable God, who exists in pure simultaneity, understand the changes involved in the give-and-take of the temporal realm?' (Gulley 2012:437).

However, the reality is that God came down to live as a human, in order to know first-hand (existentially) what He knew intellectually (from observing humans). Viewing it from this perspective, it can be argued that the incarnation means that God entered into the human living personally and from His own experience learned what it is like to live as a human (Gulley 2012:437). Although Jesus had a human birth, He had to grow up like any other human, and along the way 'He learned obedience by the things which He suffered' (Heb 5:8): 'Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people' (Heb 2:17); 'For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted' (Heb 2:18); and 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy

and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb 4:15-16). With these texts in mind, Gulley (2012:437-438) argues:

So, Christ lived a temporal life in order to help those who do the same. No timeless deity, frozen in simultaneity, could ever live a human life. No immutable God could learn obedience and be tempted, let alone die for humans. No impassible God could sympathize with human suffering in order to minister out of His human experience. Jesus really lived a human life, as is proved by His need of power from beyond Himself, making His prayer life a necessity.

Before Jesus came to earth, as second Person of the Trinity, He never had to pray for help, '[b]ut during His human life on earth, on the battleground of the enemy, prayer was His lifeline for survival' (Gulley 2012:438). He often withdrew to lonely places to pray (Luke 5:16) and at one time He spent the whole night on the mountainside, praying to God (Luke 6:12). As He faced the cross, He pled with His Father to take away the cup in Gethsemane, yet prayed that not His will be done, but the will of the Father (Luke 22:39-46). It can thus be said that 'He clung to His Father in utter dependence' (Gulley 2012:438). It was Irenaeus (120-202) (Schaff 1885a:428) who observed that some scholars alleged that 'Christ remained impassible' while 'it was Jesus who suffered', as if there was a dualism within the God-Man, which is contrary to Jesus' total dependence on God (Gulley 2012:438).

That Jesus Christ was totally dependent on His Father can clearly be seen in the following texts: John 5:30a: 'I can of myself do nothing'; John 8:28b: 'I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things'; John 14:24b: 'The word which you hear is not mine but the Father's, who sent me'; and John 6:44a: 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him'. His temptations in the wilderness were preceded by 40 days of communing with His Father while fasting, while He quoted Scripture to overcome the devil (Matt 4:1-11).

Gulley (2012:438) asserts:

During His entire life Jesus developed a sinless human character which He offers to humans as their righteousness, as if they had lived that life. This is likened to a garment of righteousness that covers humans who repent and desire to receive it, and was typified by the skins of the lambs slain for Adam and Eve that covered their nakedness.

Gulley (2012:438) asserts: 'It was the pre-incarnate Jesus as Creator of Adam and Eve who provided the covering for these first sinners (Gen. 3:21)'. These are the wedding garments that the bride of Jesus, the church, needs to wear in order to qualify to get into the wedding supper of the Lamb in heaven (Matt 22:3-14). Christians need these 'white clothes' (Rev 3:18). Gulley elaborates:

[T]hose who receive Christ's righteousness, through receiving Christ, will demonstrate works of righteousness (Rev. 19:7-8). Righteous works (δικαιώματα) are not the same as righteous character (δικαιοσύνη), rather δικαιοσύνη is what one hungers and thirsts for (Matt. 5:6), and the reception of it enables one to be 'declared righteous' (Rom. 3:20). Righteous works are the fruit of a righteous character gifted through the righteousness of Christ (Gulley 2012:438).

Gulley (2012:439) adds:

Christ lived and died as a human in order to minister in heaven's sanctuary, to meet human needs...It was on the basis of His death and life that He gave humans what they needed...He died to pay the price for sins, and He lived a human life to enable Him to sympathize with humans in their struggle and provide a garment of a righteous life to cover their sins.

Fact is that, if Jesus Christ came to this world to experience human life, He definitely also came to be an example to humans. Thus, I will now review what Gulley says on this reason for Jesus Christ's coming to this world.

#### **9.4.7.3 Jesus Christ Came to be an Example to Humans**

Gulley (2012:439) opines that, although Jesus' followers are a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17), being fitted for heaven (2 Cor 3:18), they still exist in a corruptible nature until the second advent of Jesus (1 Cor 15:50-54). Jesus therefore gifts them His sinless life as well as His substitutionary death. Paul stated that Jesus is our 'righteousness, and sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor 1:30). It can thus be argued that 'Christ lived His obedient human life, doing His Father's will, as an example for humans to follow' (Gulley 2012:439). Since the devil had no hold on Jesus as He had faithfully obeyed God (John 14:31), He would say of those who follow His example: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him' (John 14:21).

According to Gulley (2012:439), commandment keeping is not legalism or bondage, it is a covenant experience with God. Jude captures this experience in his doxology: 'Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen' (Jude 24-25). It is therefore correct to say that 'Christ's power saves humans from sin, keeping them from falling, and does so with great joy' (Gulley 2012:439). Even before the incarnation, David said to God: 'And I will delight myself in your commandments, which I love' (Ps 119:47), and 'I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved...You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore' (Ps 16:8-11). In this light, Gulley (2012:439) argues: 'Obedience is not Jewish legalism, for we are speaking about "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25a)'. Jesus Christ set an example of an obedient life for believers to follow.

The meaning of Calvary, Gulley (2012:439) argues, is that God hated sin so much that its wages had to be paid: 'Although Christ was willing to do His Father's will, and become a substitutionary sacrifice for humans, all the members of the Trinity hated sin that caused them to suffer at Calvary'. It is imperative, therefore, for the followers of Jesus to hate sin, because of what it did to Jesus and the Trinity, and because they love God and His law (Gulley 2012:439). John wrote: 'And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world' (1 John 2:1-2).

It is part of our authentic Bible teaching that Jesus Christ came to die for humans. What follows, is a review of what Gulley teaches on this aspect of the incarnation.

#### **9.4.7.4 Jesus Christ Came to Die for Humans**

According to Gulley (2012:440), '[w]e need the death of Jesus Christ to get us to heaven'. But then there is the question of how God can die. Scripture tells us that God alone has immortality (1 Tim 6:16), for He never had a beginning nor can He die. Gulley asserts that neither the Son of God, nor the divine nature in Jesus Christ, was born in the incarnation – for He had eternally self-existed as God in the Trinity (Gulley 2012:440). This means that He was not dependent upon anyone for life. However, in the incarnation, the Son of God also became the Son of Man, who could die (Gulley 2012:440). The Bible states: 'For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering' (Rom 8:3, NIV), or '...as a sin offering' (NASB, GOODSPEED). While the term 'offering' is not in the Greek text, it can be implied (Gulley 2012:440). Another rendering of Romans 8:3 is, 'sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh' (RSV, KJV, NKJV).

Gulley (2012:440) contends that the above translations are true to the author's intent, for the Son of God also became the Son of Man so that He could die. Thus, Athanasius (293-373) succinctly puts it: 'He takes to Himself a body capable of death' (Schaff 1885f:40). In His death, Jesus Christ condemned sin in the flesh (Gulley 2012:440).



To deal with the sin problem, God had to deal with its very source, the devil. Therefore, I will now review Gulley's view of how Jesus Christ defeated the devil.

#### **9.4.7.5 Jesus Christ Came to Defeat the Devil**

There is scriptural evidence that part of Jesus' mission to this world was to defeat the devil. For instance, it is written that 'the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8b). In harmony with John, the author of the letter to the Hebrews said: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil' (Heb 2:14). Gulley (2012:440) opines that the cosmic controversy attack on God brought a severance of some angelic and all human beings from God. This is called 'severance sin' (Gulley 2012:440). Gulley explains: 'Sin is a broken relationship, and it was the mission of Jesus Christ to restore the broken relationship, thereby redeeming all willing humans, and resolving the conflict for all intelligent beings. Properly understood, the redeeming-resolving work of Jesus Christ restores the universe to its pre-fall state' (Gulley 2012:440).

According to Gulley (2012:440), Jesus' cosmic mission was articulated by Paul: 'For it pleased the Father that in Him [Jesus] all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross' (Col 1:19-20). He then adds: 'Christ's crucifixion and mission impact Christians who enter into a heart-relationship with Christ, for the covenant mission is not only global (Matt. 28:20-21) but also cosmic' (Gulley 2012:440). Paul has put it this way: 'His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms [ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἔπουρανίοις; plural], according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Jesus Christ our Lord' (Eph 3:10-11).

Gulley suggests that the heavenly realms (plural) seem to go beyond heaven (singular) where angels live (Gulley 2012:441). His contention that there is a cosmic emphasis in Ephesians 3:10, is also mentioned by Lincoln (1990:188-189) and Foulkes (1988:98-99).

Liefeld (1997:86) argues that rulers and authorities may be 'all the unseen powers, good and evil', yet offers a caveat that they may only be all the evil powers.

Commenting on the views of the above three scholars (Lincoln, Foulkes, and Liefeld), Gulley (2012:441) observes: 'It is probably fair to say that these commentators don't envisage multiple worlds as part of the cosmos, but we do know of unfallen angels'. He argues further: 'Nothing is said in Scripture about other inhabited worlds for the focus is on the redemption of this one fallen world. Nevertheless, for those who believe there could be other unfallen worlds, they would be included in the revelation made by Christ in this world' (Gulley 2012:441).

As it is clear from the references above (Col 1; Eph 3), Jesus' mission was and is more than the redemption of the earth, for this is only a part of the reconciling of all things 'whether things on earth or things in heaven' involving 'rulers and authorities in heavenly realms' (Gulley 2012:441). Therefore, Jesus Christ's is a redemption-reconciliation ministry that has everything to do with resolving the cosmic controversy, in order to restore the universe to its pre-controversy state (Gulley 2012:441).

The reasons for which Jesus Christ came to this world also include the idea of Him being a sinless substitute.

#### **9.4.7.6 Jesus Christ Came to be a Sinless Substitute**

According to Gulley (2012:441), the mission of Jesus determined the extent of His identity with human nature. He states: 'It is agreed that Christ could never be our Saviour from sin if He Himself had sinned. Likewise, He had to be free from sin in His nature (not just external acts) in order to save humans from their sinful natures' (Gulley 2012:441). It is Gulley's contention that humans can only fully understand why Jesus Christ had to be free from sin in nature if they penetrate to the root cause of sin. He asserts: 'Prior to the acts of sin there is a cause of those sinful acts' (Gulley 2012:441).

It has already been noted that, foundationally, sin is a broken relationship with God (Gulley 2012:441): 'It is this broken relationship that leads to law breaking'. Gulley affirms it:

So behind sinful acts, behind a sinful nature, we find a broken relationship. It is the broken relationship between God and humans that is the chasm that Christ crossed, not to enter the broken relationship Himself, but to bridge the gap, to join divinity and humanity within Himself, and then in His life, death, and post-resurrection ministry to save humans so that they might be fit to belong to a sinless society, on God's side of the chasm (Gulley 2012:441).

Gulley (2012:442) makes this insightful comment: 'Just as the first Adam broke the relationship with God, the second Adam restored the relationship with God and humans within His own incarnational nature'. The second Adam 'united God and humans within Himself' (Gulley 2012:442). This was not all; it was just the beginning of the work that Jesus Christ had come to this world for (Gulley 2012:442). Gulley observes: 'Christ's mission was more than becoming incarnate as the God-Man. His mission included His subsequent life, death, resurrection, high priestly ministry in heaven, His second advent, and the final judgment' (Gulley 2012:441).

Gulley (2012:442) adds that Jesus Christ's mission extends from the time He was incarnated to the third advent after the millennium, and each segment of His saving ministry deserves to be understood in its own right, in its relationship to Calvary, and in its relationship to the entire mission of Jesus.

It can be argued that Gulley believes that, for Jesus Christ to be our substitute, He had to be sinless in nature as well as in acts. Had He taken upon Himself a sinful nature, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of a saviour, for before a person sins, they have a sinful nature that leads them to commit sin.

Gulley also speaks about Jesus Christ's incarnational message, which I will now briefly review.

#### **9.4.8 Jesus Christ's incarnational Message**

Jesus Christ's incarnational message deals with the nearness, the arrival of the kingdom of heaven.

##### **9.4.8.1 The Kingdom of Heaven is Near**

It appears that, according to Gulley (2012:446), the kingdom of heaven entered human history with the incarnation of Jesus. He observes that there is an eschatological future focus in the teachings of Jesus, which actually began with His forerunner, John the Baptist, proclaiming: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt 3:2). The devil tried to distract Jesus from the future focus of the kingdom by offering Him an easier way to get the kingdom (Matt 4:8-9). He offered Jesus a way to avoid the cross and still save the kingdoms of the world.

Fact is that the kingdom of heaven can only be restored by the God-Man who remains loyal to the kingdom of heaven and does God's will as a dependent human (Gulley 2012:442). Jesus met this requirement, for He depended on the word of God and did not yield (cf. Matt. 4:3-4 [Deut 8:3]; Matt 4:6-7 [Deut 6:16]; Matt 4:9-10 [Deut 6:10]). After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus Christ began to preach the same kingdom message that John the Baptist had preached (Matt 4:17; cf. Mark 1:15). He said that ever since the time of John the Baptist, the kingdom of God has been forcefully advancing (Matt 11:12). In the beatitudes, He referred to the kingdom of heaven five times (once in Matthew 5:3; once in Matthew 5:10; two times in Matthew 5:19; and once in Matthew 5:20). Thus: 'The kingdom of heaven is for the poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3), for the persecuted (5:10), for those who have a proper relationship to God's law (5:19-20) – qualities reflecting Christ and not Satan' (Gulley 2012:442).

Jesus Christ invited His hearers to first seek His heavenly Father's kingdom (Matt 6:33a), which means to seek the Father's will even as Jesus did His will (Heb 10:7). This is

because only those who do the Father's will, will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21). Responding to the Gentile centurion's faith in contrast with the Jews' lack of faith, Jesus said that many people would come from the east and the west and take their places with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the subjects of the kingdom (the Jews) would be cast out into darkness to weep and gnash on their teeth (Matt 8:11-12). According to Jesus, it is those who humble themselves like little children who will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:2-5; cf. 19:14).

One way to store up treasure in the coming kingdom is by giving to the poor (Matt 19:21b), but it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom (Matt 19:24b). In the kingdom of heaven, wages are the same for all workers regardless of when they entered the employ of the owner (Matt 20:1-16). Jesus told the chief priests and elders that the tax collectors and the prostitutes would enter the kingdom of God ahead of them (Matt 21:31b). In the parable of the wedding banquet, the king sends out invitations to the wedding banquet, but only a few respond (Matt 22:1-14). The teachers of the law as well as the Pharisees close the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces and they themselves do not enter (Matt 23:13-14).

As Jesus Christ was celebrating the Last Supper with His disciples, He stated: 'I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes' (Luke 22:18; cf. Mark 14:24b), which points to the eschatological future when Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets together with many others will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:29). It must be noted that Jesus Christ also spoke of His second coming (Matt 24:3, 29-31; Mark 8:38b; 13:26-27; 14:62).

The Bible also suggests that the kingdom of heaven has arrived, as will be discussed below.

#### **9.4.8.2 The Kingdom of Heaven has Arrived**

The activities of Jesus Christ, when doing His public ministry, suggested not merely the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, but its actual arrival. He went to all villages and towns

teaching, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness (Matt 9:35). In this light, Gulley (2012:443) asserts: 'As a teacher, preacher, and healer, Jesus ministered to the total needs of humans, in a work of restoration that reflected in history what the coming kingdom will be like. To this extent the kingdom arrived in history as a revelation and anticipation of its final coming'.

The Saviour commissioned the same work He was doing to His disciples (Matt 10:6-8). The disciples were not to do their own work, but the same work that their Master did. In other words, it was the incarnational work of Jesus, which the disciples needed to do.

Part of the evidence of the actual arrival of the kingdom of heaven is found in the invitation that Jesus offered: 'Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light' (Matt 11:28-30). Commenting to this passage of Scripture, Gulley (2012:444) avers: 'Here is the essence of the kingdom of heaven – resting in Jesus'. Jesus Christ's reaction to the plot of the Pharisees to kill Him for healing on the Sabbath, was to quietly withdraw to another place (Gulley 2012:444). However, His withdrawal did not stop His ministry of healing the sick, for many followed Him and He healed their sick people (Matt 12:1-15). Gulley contends that the Father spoke through the prophet Isaiah about this Jesus who would announce the kingdom by word and deed (Gulley 2012:444). The Father said: 'Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased! I will put my Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust' (Matt 12:18-21; cf. Is 42:1-4).

In the passage above, we see 'a picture of the humble Servant treating people with justice, and through this means bringing victory and hope to the nations' (Gulley 2012:444). In Gulley's view, 'Jesus lived the Kingdom life in the present, and as such revealed what the

kingdom of heaven is like, and through such brought the revelation and power of the kingdom of heaven into history' (Gulley 2012:444).

Jesus was unafraid to confront those opposed to God's kingdom, saying to the Pharisees: 'But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you' (Matt 12:28). According to Gulley (2012:444), this 'means more than the Kingdom is near (ἤγγικεν) (Matt. 3:2). It means the kingdom has arrived (ἔφθασεν)' – the verb used here is in the aorist form. About this aorist form of the verb, Bock (2002:577) points out that it is found in Romans 9:31; 2 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; and Philippians 3:16, and in each case it can be translated with 'has arrived' or 'has reached'. Thus, there is a difference between 'drawing near' and 'arriving' (Gulley 2012:444). When Jesus Christ exorcised demons, He demonstrated the present power of God's kingdom over Satan's kingdom. The Bible states: 'Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36)'. It is important to note that Jesus did not deny that He was God. As a matter of fact, He commended Peter for knowing that He was God, saying: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt 16:17). Jesus Christ further said: '[T]he Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins' (Luke 5:24a).

One demon asked Jesus whether He had come to destroy them, confirming that he knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God (Luke 4:34b). Other demons begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area (Mark 5:10). Commenting on these texts, Gulley (2012:444) postulates: 'Both encounters indicate how scared the demons were in the presence of the Son of Man (by contrast a believing woman just touched Christ's clothes and was healed, Mark 5:25-34)'. It must be observed that 'Christ gave the same exorcising authority to His disciples (Mark 3:15; 6:7; cf. Mark 9:14-29; 16:17). Together they represented the kingdom inaugurated, a community under the power of God' (Gulley 2012:444-445). Amazingly, Jesus even exorcised a demon from the daughter of the Syrian-Phoenician woman, even though the daughter was not present (Mark 7:26-30). In Gulley's opinion, this was evidence that God was present among humans (Gulley

2012:445). Tragically, the Jewish leaders did not recognise Jesus as God, while the demons left many people shouting that Jesus was the Son of God (cf. e.g. Luke 4:41a).

Another area where Gulley sees the presence of the kingdom of heaven inaugurated by the incarnation, is Jesus Christ's teachings through the parables. According to Gulley (2012:445), 'Jesus taught parables of the kingdom of heaven that indicated its presence in human history'. Whereas Matthew calls it the 'kingdom of heaven', Mark called it the 'kingdom of God' (cf. e.g. Mark 4:11, 26, 30; 9:47b; 10:14-15), and so did Luke (e.g. Luke 4:43; 6:20b). There is a contrast where the sower (Son of Man) sows good seed and the enemy (the devil) sows weeds, and they both grow together until the harvest at the end of the world (Matt 13:24-30, 37-43; cf. Mark 4:13-20). The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, small at first, but growing always larger (Matt 13:31-32) and like yeast working all through the dough (Matt 4:13:33). Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is also like a treasure hidden in a field, a pearl of great value to those who discern its value (cf. Matt 13:44-46). Jesus Christ's teachings through parables were a fulfilment of the prophecy about Jesus: He would 'open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world' (Matt 13:35; cf. Ps 78:2, NIV). The Son of Man spoke of wise people preparing for the kingdom of heaven, while the unwise do not prepare (Matt 25:1-13).

Gulley (2012:445) makes this conclusion: 'So in these two segments we have two foci on the kingdom of heaven – it is coming in the future, and in one sense it has already come in the present'. Thus, it can be argued that Gulley sees the incarnation as having inaugurated the kingdom of grace (working in the present time) and the kingdom of glory (the awaited kingdom that will begin at Jesus Christ's second coming). These are, nevertheless, not separate kingdoms, but one kingdom that takes two phases: The present phase and the future phase. This is the incarnational message of Jesus Christ made possible because of the incarnation of God, which was necessitated by His mission. It must be noted that Gulley looks at the kingdom of heaven in context.



### **9.4.8.3 The Kingdom of Heaven in Context**

It has been contended that the kingdom of heaven did not come in the manner that Judaism thought it would come: 'They expected that the arrival of the Messiah would mark an abrupt change between the then-present age and the Messianic age. Yet in reality, with the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven arrived, and was concurrent with the then-present age' (Gulley 2012:445). What this suggests is that 'there was no abrupt break between the two ages, but an overlap between the two ages' (Gulley 2012:445-446). The incarnation through a human being living within the present age meant that the Messianic age would act as leaven in the present age, and not come after it.

It must be understood that, according to Gulley (2012:446), the kingdom of heaven can be understood both as Jesus' rule and as the realm over which He rules. Thus, although His rule began with His incarnation, He has not yet ruled over the entire realm (Gulley 2012:446). This will happen when all the kingdoms of this world yield to the kingdom of God in a new heaven and a new earth in fulfilment of the Lord's Prayer: 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt 6:10). Gulley therefore asserts: 'This is the future dimension of the Kingdom. Prior to that final realm of the Kingdom, the Kingdom now is wherever God's power is present in the lives of His people and in their ministry for Him' (Gulley 2012:446).

Gulley notes: 'As a human He lived on earth, filled with the Spirit, empowered by the Father, revealing what God is like, dependent as a human on God...The in-breaking of the Kingdom was through this dependence. Never before had such power been seen on planet earth' (Gulley 2012:446). The dead came back to life, and Jesus spoke with authority as none other. This was a foretaste of what was yet to come – miracles and messages of the Son of Man pointed beyond this world as it is (under the prince of this age) to a new world when sin and sinners will be no more. Gulley relates: 'In that new world Jesus will live as the Son of God, no longer as a dependent human. The rebellion will be over, and God's rule will be universal again' (Gulley 2012:446).

The future universal rule will be a rule of the Trinity, just like it had been before the incarnation of Jesus: 'In eternity Christ shared in that rule. When rebellion broke out, He was willing to leave the throne and enter the realm where Satan ruled' (Gulley 2012:446).

Gulley adds:

At the appointed time He came to live on the dangerous battleground as a dependent human. He steadfastly overcame all that Satan flung at Him, trials and temptations, hatred of His own nation and religion. He went to the cross willingly but in great agony and died as a conqueror. Satan was defeated at the Cross. His rule must now come to an end – it is only a matter of time. It was during the time when Satan still ruled that Christ as the Son of Man began His rule. The conflict between these two rules reveals the essence of the cosmic controversy – Satan wants to replace Christ (Gulley 2012:446).

In the opinion of Gulley (2012:446), as has already been stated, 'the kingdom of heaven entered into human history with the incarnation', as Gulley argues:

The Son of Man was the object of hatred under the rule of Satan on planet earth, since all hell broke out when the Son of God became also the Son of Man, when Christ laid aside the use of divinity, and as a dependent man met Satan, the leader of rebellion, on his home turf (Gulley 2012:446).

It is important to note that Jesus and Satan met each other as created beings (Gulley 2012:446). However, the fight began when Jesus was only a baby and Satan a master of skilful deception, having overcome angels and humans (cf. Gulley 2012:446). Gulley opines that God must have given Jesus special protection during the early years, otherwise the devil would most probably have won the fight (Gulley 2012:446). However, he remarks that whatever God did to aid the very young Jesus, was not just for Jesus – it was for all humans, for without that help, humans would not have a Saviour (Gulley

2012:446-447). Gulley adds: 'Even as a growing boy who still had much to learn, Jesus faced a brilliant, devious, and tyrannical enemy' (Gulley 2012:447).

The total effect of all that has been pointed out is this: 'God sent Jesus behind enemy lines in the midst of the greatest battle to win back the Kingdom through pain and suffering that took Him to Calvary. He suffered, desiring to escape the cruelty from humans and the agony of being a sin-bearer for [the] world' (Gulley 2012:447). Gulley (2012:447) further remarks: 'Human salvation lay in the balance as He cried out, "Take this cup from me" (Luke 22:42)'. However, 'in submission to His Father's will, He descended into the darkness of evil as all human sin was laid on Him, crushing His human life' (Gulley 2012:447). In hope of the future rule of Jesus, Gulley states: 'He died a conqueror and won back the kingdom; at His second coming and beyond, His rule will be revealed to all' (Gulley 2012:447).

Gulley accords with Wells (1984:25) who opines:

This theme, then, provides the broad but proper context in which the Christ-event is to be interpreted, for it gives a single, integrated framework in which the Rule – inaugurated by incarnation, effected decisively by Jesus' cross-work, and concluded by the παρουσία and its concomitants of the final subduing of all evil and the return of the pacified cosmos to the Father – can be understood.

To sum up, it can be stated that Gulley (2012:447) suggests that in Matthew's Gospel, there is a three-dimensional reality of the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom of heaven 'was inaugurated by Christ's incarnation (past), is active throughout His ministry (present), and will be coming in the future' (Gulley 2012:447). Gulley suggests that, as we consider what kind of humanity Jesus Christ took, we should think of it in terms of the mission for which He came to this world, for even the message that He preached had the incarnation as its context, which had Jesus' mission as its context. However, there is still a need to review what Gulley avers about Jesus Christ's incarnational life.

#### **9.4.9 Jesus Christ's Incarnational Life**

So far, my review has revealed that Gulley believes that Jesus Christ was 'God with us' and 'God became human'. In other words, God and humankind united in one Person: The God-Man. The question that has to be asked is: What does it mean to have God and humankind united in one Person?

Gulley (2012:448) argues that the Son of Man essentially began where the first Adam had begun. In other words, where the God-human relationship was broken by the first Adam, the second Adam began by restoring the broken relationship within His divine-human nature (Gulley 2012:448). He observes that the incarnational union of God and humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ was only the beginning of a long restoration process. This is in line with what Paul proclaimed: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself' (2 Cor 5:19). In Gulley's view, the text does not state that Jesus' divine nature was reconciling the world in Jesus Christ, but God was accomplishing the reconciliation (Gulley 2012:448). He contrasts this with the teaching of Eastern theology, 'where salvation is purely an internal matter, where the divine nature of Christ divinized the humanity of Christ, so that humanity in Christ became deity' (Gulley 2012:448). He contends: 'This [Eastern view of reconciliation] is not reconciliation, but a transformation of humanity never intended by God' (Gulley 2012:448).

It is important to point out that Gulley views Jesus' incarnational life in terms of *kenosis* and *temptations*, which I will now review.

##### **9.4.9.1 Jesus Christ's *Kenosis***

Paul described what was involved in Jesus' incarnational life: '[Jesus] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross' (Phil 2:6-8).

Commenting on this text, Gulley (2012:448) opines: 'This emptying, or kenosis, was not an emptying of His deity, as if He were only human, but an emptying of His prerogative to use His deity to help His humanity. He laid aside the use of His divine powers while remaining fully divine and human'.

What this implies is that 'the divine-human reality was fully present, but He continually refrained from acting as God as He lived out His human life' (Gulley 2012:448). This explains 'why the text speaks of Jesus Christ humbling Himself as a servant (*δοῦλος* can be translated with 'slave', Phil 2:7), even unto death' (Gulley 2012:448). Gulley adds: 'Like other humans the Son of Man depended on divine power from beyond Himself, and lived a dependent life on the Father and the Spirit. In so doing Christ became a model for humans, and showed them how to live a Christian life' (Gulley 2012:448).

According to Gulley (2012:449), Jesus Christ fully depended on the Father and the Spirit for whatever He taught and did. This is made clear in texts like John 5:19; 7:16; 8:26b; 12:49; 14:24b; and 15:15b. He did not depend on His inherent divinity, but on the divine power of His Father (Gulley 2012:449). Thus, He said: 'I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things. And He who sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone, for I always do those things that please Him' (John 8:28-29). He added: 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30), for 'the Father is in me, and I in Him' (John 10:38b).

When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, He told them that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father, for the Father was in Him, and He was in the Father (John 14:9b-11). On the basis of this text, Gulley (2012:449) argues that Jesus came to reveal the Father, to reveal the humility of His eternal love. He opines: 'He came to reveal that the Father and the Spirit would have entered *kenosis*, just as He did, if they had come instead of Him, for all three reveal and reciprocate the same love in their inner history' (Gulley 2012:449). Gulley argues:

He did not come to complete what was begun in creation (as in Irenaeus), as if creation had been a pre-requisite for the incarnation

(Karl Barth). God did not plan to become a human, even apart from the sin of Adam (this would call into question His utter selflessness in becoming human). Why would the Creator-God long to become part of creation? The incarnation was not a dream come true for Christ, but a great risk of failure and eternal loss. He lived as a dependent human, even as He sought to win salvation for humankind. He lived in the power of His heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit (Gulley 2012:449).

Gulley (2012:449) seems to suggest that evidence that Jesus Christ fully depended on the Father in His human life and that He did nothing except that which the Father did through Him, can also be observed in what He said when people rejected His miracles. Jesus Christ said: 'He who hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both me and my Father' (John 15:23-24). Gulley (2012:449-440) contends that, in the future, because of Jesus Christ's successful mission, the Father will exalt Him to the highest place, and that, at His Name 'every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2:10-11, NIV).

#### **9.4.9.2 Jesus Christ's Temptations**

One area in Gulley's Christology, of great interest to me, is his view of the temptations of the Son of Man. He begins his comments on Jesus' temptations with this observation: 'Since through *kenosis* (Phil. 2:7) Jesus laid aside the use of His divine nature, to live as a human on earth, logically this included laying aside His omnipresence' (Gulley 2012:454). He concurs with Ware (2010:13-14) who argues that Jesus did not overcome 'by recourse to his divine nature but through the resource provided to him in his full humanity'. He avers, however: 'Yet I will go beyond Ware's model, and suggest that divine nature was a disadvantage to Christ in His temptations' (Gulley 2012:454). To the question: How are humans tempted? Gulley refers to James 1:14 where it is noted that 'each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed' (Gulley 2012:454).

He then argues: 'Evil propensities (a leaning to sin) are (1) acquired through being born a sinner, and are (2) developed through sinning. Christ had neither' (Gulley 2012:454). This, in Gulley's view, is because Jesus was born 'that holy thing' (Luke 1:35, KJV), and Satan had no hold on Him (John 14:30). It should be noted that, while Gulley suggests that Jesus did not have a leaning to sin, he confirms that Scripture says that because 'He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18)'. Gulley (2012:454) argues:

Unless He had been subjected to temptation like us, He could not be a sympathetic High Priest in His present ministry in heaven. He could only accomplish these things by living on earth as a human, being tempted like humans, and overcoming as a human by relying upon His Father (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16).

Jesus Christ could understand human temptation only if He were tempted as a human (Gulley 2012:454-455). In other words, if Jesus had not been tempted the way that human beings are tempted, He would not have been of any help to us where temptation is concerned. However, according to Gulley (2012:455), 'Christ's temptations were greater than ours for the full force of temptation is not known by those who give in, but only by those who never do – Christ alone belongs to this latter category'. He adds: 'When humans give in, it is over – there is no more pressure to resist' (Gulley 2012:455).

Gulley's understanding of Jesus Christ's temptation follows the lead of Bruce ([1972] 1974:87-88) who asserts: 'Yet He endured triumphantly every form of testing that man could endure, without any weakening of His faith in God or any relaxation of His obedience to Him. Such endurance involves more, not less, than ordinary human suffering'. This thought has also been expressed by Westcott: '[S]ympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain' (Westcott 1950:59).

Commenting on Hebrews 4:15, Gulley (2012:455) argues that the phrase 'in every way' does not mean the same temptations (plural), but the same temptation (singular). For example, Jesus was never tempted to speed down the highway or gamble in Las Vegas, but He was tempted to act as God. Granted that Jesus had an eternal habit of acting as God – and that was never sin – if He had acted as God to gain an advantage in overcoming temptations while on earth, that would have been a betrayal of what He set aside in becoming a dependent human (Gulley 2012:455). Gulley adds: 'To act as God would give Him an advantage in overcoming temptation and would have disqualified Him from understanding human temptation as faced by all other humans' (Gulley 2012:455).

Gulley (2012:455) opines that the essence of temptation is not only to do a wrong act, but to break a right relationship with God, which then leads to that wrong act. He asserts: 'The fact that Christ as God was sinless in nature, and hence unlike other humans, didn't give Him an advantage; in fact, it was a great disadvantage' (Gulley 2012:455). In this light, Gulley asks: 'If the thrust of temptation is to get one to rely upon oneself, and thus sever relational ties of dependency upon God, who would have the greater temptation, Jesus who had His own divinity to empower Him, or humans who have nothing comparable?' (Gulley 2012:455).

Gulley (2012:455) asserts that Jesus' disadvantage in temptation issued out of His uniqueness, not out of His likeness with humans. It is his contention that both Jesus' far more difficult human life and our salvation rest in this uniqueness. Only Jesus felt the full force of Satanic hatred, for Satan's controversy was against Jesus and not against any other human, and yet only Jesus would not receive forgiveness if He had yielded to temptation (Gulley 2012:455).

Gulley (2012:456) opines:

No one has suffered like Jesus, and no one has ever been driven to hold on to God as He did. He hated sin and had no propensities to sin, so that was no problem. But He knew how to act as God. He had an eternal habit of doing so. To remain a dependent human,



and not rely upon His own divinity within, was a temptation that no other human will ever experience or understand. Starving for nearly six weeks in the wilderness when He could have turned stones to bread was a temptation far harder than any sinful urge any of us will ever experience (Matt. 4:1-4).

This bold statement summarises Gulley's view:

So, Christ's uniqueness, not His identity with us, gave Him a disadvantage in temptations and gave us the advantage of a sinless Saviour, who could live and die as our Substitute. Jesus Christ, the 'one of a kind' person (μονογενής), was in nature as well as acts 'holy, blameless set apart from sinners' (Heb. 7:26), and this is why He could say that Satan found 'no hold over me' (John 14:30) (Gulley 2012:456).

What needs to be emphasised is that, in Gulley's view, Jesus was sinless in both nature and acts. However, He lived on earth as a human so that He could understand what humans go through. Gulley (2012:456) observes that, because Jesus lived a human life, He is able to be a merciful and sympathetic High Priest in His present ministry in the heaven's sanctuary. He knew what it was to earnestly petition God, even with tears. What burdened Him was the salvation of His people, which was at stake (Gulley 2012:456).

It must again be pointed out that Jesus 'lived as a human, submitted and dependent upon God for His presence and power to live a life free from sin' (Gulley 2012:456). In this light, Gulley states: 'Therefore, I cannot agree with Bruce Ware when he states, "even though Christ's human will could sin, his divine will strengthened the human will such that the human will, so divinely empowered, could not sin"' (Gulley 2012:456; cf. Ware 2010:5-18). Gulley (2012:457) is of the opinion that, if Jesus Christ's case had been as Ware suggests, it would call His dependence upon the Father and Spirit into question. His divine will did not strengthen His human will so that He could not sin. What is biblically correct is that the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to overcome temptation (Matt 4:1-11; cf. Luke 4:13).

In His great struggle with temptation in Gethsemane, an angel came from heaven to strengthen Him (Luke 22:39-46). Had Jesus been allowed to use His inherent divine power, He would not have needed an angel to strengthen Him.

To conclude then, it can be argued that for Gulley, Jesus Christ was indeed tempted as a human being. However, He was not tempted as a human with propensities to sin, for He was sinless in nature. His disadvantage was in His uniqueness, not in His identity with fallen humans. He was tempted to use His inherent divinity to His own advantage. Since He was tempted as a human, He is a sympathetic High Priest in His present ministry in the heaven's sanctuary.

For the purposes of this study, I would like to ask Gulley some few questions: If Jesus Christ was sinless in His human nature, how can He sympathise with a human who has a sinful nature and is tempted in that sinful human nature? Did He really feel temptation as a fallen human feels it? If the fact that Jesus Christ was sinless in His human nature made His temptation more difficult to overcome, does it not excuse Adam who sinned in a sinless nature? Would it not be correct then, to conclude that Adam sinned because he found it very difficult to overcome his temptation in his sinless nature? If it is more difficult to overcome temptation in a sinless human nature, then would it be correct to conclude that it is easier to overcome temptation in a sinful nature? If that were to be the case, how would we explain the fact that born-again fallen humans find it difficult to overcome temptation? These questions will set the stage for a critical evaluation of Gulley's position on the human nature of Jesus Christ.

After Jesus had faithfully obeyed His Father through a total dependence on the Father and the Holy Spirit, He died on Calvary's cross. In what follows, I will review what Gulley says about His death.

#### **9.4.10 Jesus Christ's Death**

Gulley (2012:467) boldly believes that Jesus Christ died, for if He did not die, then there was no meaning in His resurrection. He, however, observes that we need to carefully

think, through what death means to the eternal God compared to what it means to a created being, 'for Jesus Christ was both, united in the unique God-Man forever' (Gulley 2012:467). In Gulley's opinion, 'He was a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature; for God alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16)' (Gulley 2012:467).

According to Gulley (2012:467), 'Both His [Jesus'] birth and death were unique acts that cannot ever be experienced by anyone else'. It is difficult to say what really happened in the death of Jesus. Though, what is clear in Gulley's opinion, is that divinity did not die, for divinity cannot die – it was the human nature of Jesus that died; but what happened to Jesus' divine nature? Gulley responds: 'In this context we can say the following: Just as Christ's divine nature was alive but quiescent in the womb, so it was alive and quiescent in the tomb' (Gulley 2012:467).

What kind of death did Jesus then die? Was it a physical death? Was it an eternal death? There is nothing unique about a physical death, for all human beings who have died, have already experienced this death. Gulley suggests that Jesus' death was a unique act. No human being has ever died the second death or the wages of sin (Rom 6:23). Therefore, if, as Gulley suggests, Jesus' death was a unique act, it follows that He died the second death. This is the death that those who reject God's gift of salvation through Jesus will experience (cf. Rev 14:9-11; 20:6-15). This is the death that Satan and his agents will die (cf. Matt 25:41, 46).

Gulley (2012:466) argues: 'Nothing can separate a person from God (Rom. 8:35-39), except sin (Isa. 59:2; cf. Psa. 51:4a, 11; Jer. 3:12), and Jesus felt this separation to His depths, for He bore "the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2b)'. He asserts that Jesus plunged into hell to save humans, whatever the price was to Himself (Gulley 2012:466). What must be noted is that Jesus experienced a separation from His Father (cf. Matt 26:46), because the sins of the whole world were laid on Him (1 Pet 2:24). However, never before this time of sacrifice did sin bring separation from Jesus' Father (Gulley 2012:466). It can therefore be related that the second or eternal death is a separation from God, brought about as a result of sin.

After dying on Calvary's cross, Jesus Christ rose from the grave and ascended to heaven. Of further interest to me in this study is the nature of Jesus' body after His resurrection. Therefore, I will now review what Gulley argues regarding Jesus' resurrection and His resurrection body.

#### **9.4.11 Jesus Christ's Resurrection and His Resurrection Body**

Gulley (2012:471) makes it clear that 'Christ arose bodily from the grave'. He sees evidence of Jesus' bodily resurrection in texts such as Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:30; and John 20:17, 24-28. In Gulley's view, 'There is a bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection' (Gulley 2012:471). He opines:

Christ didn't need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility, or from mortality to immortality, for He was sinless and divine (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) throughout His life on earth, and thus different from all His followers who will be raised at His second advent (1 Cor. 15:50-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-18) (Gulley 2012:471-472).

On this point, Gulley can be questioned on the following: First, if Jesus did not need to be changed from mortality to immortality, did He really die? What was the purpose of His resurrection? Was its purpose not to immortalise Jesus' human life? As a matter of fact, Gulley (2012:467) asserts: 'This means that He was a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature; for God alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16)'. How does Gulley expect one to reconcile these two statements? If Jesus was a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature, did His mortal human nature not need to be changed from mortality to immortality? Is Gulley suggesting that Jesus' inherent immortal divine nature immortalised His mortal human nature? Is he suggesting that the immortalisation of Jesus' mortal human nature did not have to be done the same way it will be done for human beings who are only human and not divine? What is Gulley really trying to convey?

The second question Gulley has to answer relates to his argument that Jesus did not need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility. In Hebrews 2:14, the author of the letter to the Hebrews stated: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh

and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil'. This text suggests that Jesus shared in the same 'flesh and blood' that the human beings He came to save have partaken in. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul argued: 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption'. If Jesus shared in the same 'flesh and blood' that all other human beings have, while 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God', did Jesus not need to have His human nature (flesh and blood) changed in order for Him to go to heaven, which is currently God's place of rulership? Alternatively, is Gulley suggesting that the 'flesh and blood' in Hebrews 2:14 is different from the 'flesh and blood' in 1 Corinthians 15:50?

Finally, if in the incarnation, Jesus took a weak physical human nature that all other human beings have, did He not need to have this nature changed through His resurrection? Does He still possess a physically weak nature afterwards? In other words, can He still get tired and weary? Can He still feel thirsty and hungry? I will discuss these questions when evaluating Gulley's Christology.

## **9.5 Conclusion**

This review shows that Gulley believes that Jesus' human nature was neither that of pre-fall Adam nor that of post-fall Adam. Jesus' human nature was unique. He had a spiritual nature like that of Adam before he fell into sin and a physical human nature like that of the fallen humanity. Jesus was the God-Man, the only Person who had two natures – both divine and human. He was the only Person who eternally existed as God before He became a human being. Before the incarnation, Jesus made a decision to obey His Father while here on earth. He was sinless in both His human nature and in His performance. In an inexplicable way, Jesus did not inherit from His mother, Mary, the tendency to sin, which all other human beings inherit from their parents.

According to Gulley, when we think about the incarnation, we have to think about Jesus' mission, for this is what determined what kind of human nature He took upon His divine nature. Jesus' mission was primarily to become our substitute and to die the death we

deserved to die. In this way He would reconcile us back to God. He did not come to be part of the sin problem, but to bridge the gulf that had been caused by Adam's sin. For this reason, He had to be free from both sin as a tendency and sin as an act. Had Jesus taken upon His divine nature the propensities and drives that we have, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of a saviour. He would have thus been disqualified from being a blameless sacrifice for sin.

Since Jesus did not have propensities and drives that all the other human beings are born with, His temptations did not come from these. He was tempted as the human nature is tempted, but in His case, He did not commit sin. He was tempted to stop trusting and depending on His Father and to use His inherent divinity to advantage Himself. His holy life and inherent divinity made His temptations more difficult to bear than the temptations that anyone of us will ever experience. He was tempted to the last strain of temptation, but He did not yield. And since those who do not yield to temptation are the ones who really feel its power, it can be said that He felt the full weight of temptation. His struggle with temptation was more agonising than we will ever experience since we have yielded to our temptations.

It was necessary for God to become a human, for had He not done so, He would not have died, for He is immortal. Therefore, Jesus was a union of divine nature and human nature. At the cross, His human nature died, for it was mortal. Our sins were laid on Him and this brought about a separation from His Father. Thus, Jesus died the second death.

Since Jesus did not commit any sin, death could not keep Him in the grave. He therefore rose from the grave – this was a bodily resurrection. There is a bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection. This is because He did not need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility, or from mortality to immortality, for He was sinless and divine throughout His life on earth and thus different from all His followers who will be raised at His second advent.

This review of the Christological views of the three selected scholars has been a long journey. For reasons that have been highlighted in the review, each scholar takes a different position on Jesus' human nature. Sequeira takes the position that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, with propensities and drives common to all the fallen, sinful human beings. On the other hand, Erickson takes the position that Jesus' human nature did not have the propensities and drives common to the fallen, sinful human beings, for His spiritual nature was like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. According to Erickson, Jesus' physical nature was like that of other human beings. Gulley is of the view that Jesus' human nature was neither like that of Adam before he fell into sin nor like that of Adam after he fell into sin, for His human nature was unique. His human nature, according to Gulley, had the elements of both a fallen and unfallen human nature.

There is a question of whether the law of heredity applied to Jesus as much as it does to all human beings. Is sin genetically transmitted? Did God have to create a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum in order for Jesus to be born a male? If Jesus was created after the genetic material of Mary alone, was He her clone? These questions suggest an inclusion of a chapter on human reproduction, genetics, and cloning. Therefore, in the chapter that follows, I will give a brief review of literature on human reproduction, genetics, and cloning.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **HUMAN REPRODUCTION, GENETICS, AND CLONING**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

In chapters 7, 8, and 9, I reviewed the Christological views of Sequeira, Erickson, and Gulley, respectively. Erickson's argument that God created a sperm for the incarnation, for if Jesus Christ had been produced after the genetic pattern of Mary alone, He would have been her clone and necessarily female, has partly motivated the inclusion of this chapter in this study. The concept of inheritance has also motivated the inclusion of this chapter. It will assist me in evaluating Erickson's argument and the concept of inheritance as it relates to Jesus Christ's human nature.

#### **10.2 Human Reproduction**

Reproduction is a biological process through which living things ensure continuity of their species. It is either sexual or asexual. In human beings, reproduction is sexual. This means that, in order for a new human being to be formed, there must be a fertilisation of the ovum by the sperm. The ovum or egg is supplied by the woman, while the sperm is supplied by the man. Except in cases of artificial insemination, fertilisation takes place when one of the many sperms deposited by the man into the woman's vagina during sexual intercourse, finds its way to the ovum and penetrates it. New life begins immediately after fertilisation has taken place.

When the ovum has been released from the ovary, it is swept into the oviduct and moved toward the uterus (Enger & Ross 2003:395). If a sperm is present, it fertilizes the ovum (egg). It is important to note that the sperm and ovum are haploid, which means that each of them has 23 chromosomes. What is formed when fertilisation takes place, is called a *zygote*. The zygote is diploid, which means that it has 46 chromosomes, which is a mass of cells. The zygote continues to travel down the oviduct. As it does, it begins to divide by mitosis into smaller and smaller cells without having the mass of cells increase in size (Enger & Ross 2003:396). Biologists call this division process *cleavage*. The zygote continues to divide until a solid ball of cells is produced, known as the morula stage of



embryological development. The solid ball of cells eventually becomes hollow and begins to increase in size, which is known as the blastula stage. When the embryo is about 6 days old, it becomes embedded or implanted in the lining of the uterus. The blastula has a region of cells called the *inner-cell mass* that develops into the embryo proper. The outer cells become membranes, associated with the embryo (Enger & Ross 2003:396).

In the next stage of development, which is called the gastrula stage, the gut is formed. The embryo develops a tube that eventually becomes the gut. The formation of the primitive gut is just one of a series of changes that eventually result in an embryo that is recognisable as a miniature human being. As the development takes place, the embryo is enclosed in a water-filled membrane, called the amnion, which protects it from blows and keeps it moist. There are two other membranes, called the chorion and allantois, which fuse with the lining of the uterus to form the placenta. It is through the placenta that the nutritional needs of the embryo are met. The placenta has another function – to produce the hormone, chorionic gonadotropin, that stimulates the corpus luteum to continue producing progesterone and thus prevents menstruation and ovulation during gestation (Enger & Ross 2003:396).

According to Sadler (2006:3), the process of progressing from a single cell through the period of establishing organ primordia, which actually covers the first eight weeks of pregnancy, is called the period of embryogenesis (sometimes called the period of organogenesis). The period from that point on until birth is called the foetal period, which is the time when differentiation continues while the foetus grows and gains weight.

As the embryo's cells divide and grow, some of them become differentiated into nerve cells, bone cells, blood cells, and other specialised cells. As already noted above, nourishment to the embryo, which ensures growth and differentiation of cells, is provided by the mother through the placenta. In the placenta, both the foetal and maternal blood vessels are abundant, allowing for exchange of substances between the mother and embryo. According to Enger and Ross (2003:397), the materials diffusing across the placenta, include oxygen, carbon dioxide, nutrients, and a variety of waste products. The materials

entering the embryo travel through blood vessels in the umbilical cord. The growth of the embryo results in the development of major parts of the body by the tenth week of pregnancy, after which time the embryo continues to increase in size and the structure of the body is refined.

In humans, gestation takes about nine months, at the end of which hormone changes in the mother's body stimulate contractions of the muscles of the uterus during the period prior to birth, called labour. The contractions are stimulated by the hormone oxytocin, which is released from the posterior pituitary (Enger & Ross 2003:398). The amnion (bag of water) surrounding the baby bursts. After this, the uterine contractions become stronger and shortly thereafter the baby is born. The contractions normally move the baby headfirst through the vagina or birth canal.

Fertilisation ensures the inheritance of physical characteristics from both the father and mother. In other words, at the time the baby is born, it has acquired from its parents, endowments such as skin colour, earlobe shape, intelligence, and others. These characteristics are produced by genes. The study of genes, how these genes produce characteristics, and how the characteristics are inherited, is called genetics (Enger & Ross 2003:172). Since one of the aims of this study is to find out how the law of heredity worked at the incarnation, it is important to discuss genetics.

### **10.3 Genetics**

Enger and Ross (2003:172) define genetics as the study of genes, how genes produce characteristics, and how these characteristics are inherited. Some important terms related to genetics include chromosomes, genes, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), and inheritance. Below, I will discuss autosomal inheritance, sex-linked inheritance, gene mutations, and ageing.

#### **10.3.1 Chromosomes**

Almost every body cell (with the exception of red blood cells and the gametes or sex cells) contains, within its nucleus, an identical copy of the entire complement of the individual's

genetic material. When a cell prepares to divide, it is collected into a highly visible, compact, sausage-shaped structures, which geneticists call chromosomes. Chromosomes exist in pairs, one inherited from the father and one from the mother. Thus, the human cell has 46 chromosomes that can be arranged as 23 pairs. Cells exist either as diploid or haploid. A cell with 23 pairs of chromosomes is termed diploid. Gametes (spermatozoa and ova) have only half of the normal complement, that is, 23 chromosomes instead of 46. Therefore, they are described as haploid cells. Chromosomes belonging to the same pair are called homologous chromosomes. The complete set of chromosomes in a cell is its karyotype.

Pairs of chromosomes are all numbered, the largest pair being number 1. The first 22 pairs are called autosomes, and the chromosomes of each pair contain the same amount of genetic material. The chromosomes of pair 23 are called the sex chromosomes, because they determine the individual's sex. It is noteworthy that, unlike the autosomes, these two chromosomes are not necessarily the same size – the Y chromosome is much shorter than the X chromosome and is carried only by males. This means that a child inheriting two X chromosomes (XX), one from the mother and one from the father, is female, and a child inheriting an X from his mother and a Y from his father (XY) is male.

### **10.3.2 Genes**

A gene is a portion of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) that determines a characteristic. Each gene contains information in code that allows the cell to make a specific protein, called the gene product. It is interesting to note that each gene codes for one specific protein. Current research puts the number of genes in the human genome at between 25,000 and 30,000. Genes exist in pairs, because the gene on one chromosome is matched at the equivalent site or locus on the other chromosome of the pair (Waugh & Grant 2014:438). Genes are transferred from one generation to another through meiosis and reproduction. They are composed of specific sequences of DNA nucleotides. A particular gene is located at a specific place on a chromosome, called its locus.

### **10.3.3 Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)**

DNA is a double-stranded molecule, made of two chains of nucleotides (Waugh & Grant 2014:438). Nucleotides consist of three subunits, which are a sugar, a phosphate group, and a base. Geneticists sometimes liken the DNA molecule to a twisted ladder, with the uprights formed by alternating chains of sugar and phosphate units.

One amazing characteristic of DNA is that it carries a huge amount of information that determines all biological activities of an organism, and which is transmitted from one generation to the next (Waugh & Grant 2014:439). This means that without DNA, biological activities of an organism would not take place. It is important to note that the key to how this information is kept is found in the bases within DNA, which are four, namely adenine (A), guanine (G), thymine (T), and cytosine (C). These are arranged in a precise order along the DNA molecule, making a base code that can be read when a protein synthesis is required. Research has shown that each base along one strand of the DNA pairs with a base on the other strand in a precise and predictable way. Geneticists call this *complementary base pairing*. It is worth noting that adenine always pairs with thymine (and *vice versa*), while cytosine and guanine always go together. Also noteworthy is the fact that bases on opposed strands run down the middle of the helix and bind to one another with hydrogen bonds.

#### **10.3.3.1 Mitochondrial DNA**

On average, each body cell has 5,000 mitochondria that hold a quantity of mitochondrial DNA, coding for enzymes that are important in energy production and other biological activities (Waugh & Grant 2014:440). Genetic studies have shown that this DNA is passed from one generation to another through the ovum, which means that the offspring's complement of mitochondrial DNA is inherited from the mother. The implication of this is that certain rare inherited disorders that arise from faulty mitochondrial DNA are passed from one generation to the next through the maternal line.

### 10.3.4 Inheritance

Genes are responsible for the transmission of characteristics from one generation to the next. For the purposes of this study, I will discuss autosomal inheritance and sex-linked inheritance. A listing of the genes present in an organism is called its *genotype* (Enger & Ross 2003:172). This consists of the cell's DNA code, which means that one cannot see the genotype of an organism. Geneticists say that it is not yet possible to know the complete genotype of most organisms, but it is often possible to figure out the genes present that determine a particular characteristic. Genotypes are typically represented by upper and lower letters. For example, in the case of the tongue-rolling trait, the allele for tongue-rolling is designated 'T', whereas that for non-tongue-rolling is 't'. A person's genotype could be 1) two alleles for non-tongue rolling (tt), 2) one allele for tongue-rolling and one allele for non-tongue-rolling (Tt), or 3) two alleles for tongue-rolling (TT).

The way alleles express (show) themselves is known as the *phenotype* of the organism (Enger & Ross 2003:173). The degree to which a gene goes through transcription and translation to show itself as an observable feature of an individual is known as *gene expression*.

#### 10.3.4.1 Autosomal Inheritance

Autosomal inheritance is that form of inheritance that is related to autosomal chromosomes – the first 22 pairs of chromosomes. Research has shown that each pair of homologous chromosomes contains genes for the same traits. An example that can be given is the person's ability to roll the tongue. This ability is coded for on a single gene. Since one chromosome for tongue-rolling is inherited from the mother and one from the father, an individual has two genes controlling the ability to roll the tongue. These paired genes are called *alleles*. It is noteworthy that corresponding alleles contain genes concerned with the same trait, but they need not be identical. An individual can either have two identical forms of the gene (homozygous) or two different forms of the gene (heterozygous). In the case of tongue-rolling, an individual would have (TT), (Tt), or (tt).

Below is an explanation of how inheritance takes place using tongue-rolling and other examples. It is important to note that one copy of the tongue-rolling gene may code for the ability to roll the tongue, but the corresponding gene on the other chromosome of the pair may be a different form and code for an inability to tongue roll. If the father is homozygous for tongue rolling (TT) and the mother is heterozygous for tongue-rolling (Tt), all the children will be tongue rollers, with 50 percent homozygous for tongue-rolling (TT) and another 50 percent heterozygous for tongue-rolling (Tt). The children who have (Tt) are tongue rollers, but they carry a gene for non-tongue-rolling. If the father has (TT) and the mother also has (TT), all the children will be homozygous tongue rollers. In case one parent has (Tt) and the other parent has (tt), 50 percent of the children will be heterozygous tongue rollers, while another 50 percent will be non-tongue rollers. Where both parents have (tt), all the children will be homozygous non-tongue rollers. If both parents are heterozygous for tongue-rolling (Tt), then, 25 percent of the children will be homozygous tongue rollers (TT), 50 percent heterozygous tongue rollers (Tt), and 25 percent homozygous non-tongue rollers.

An individual can either have free-earlobes or attached-earlobes. An individual with the free-earlobe phenotype can have different genotypes. Alleles for the earlobe trait are 'E' for free-earlobe and 'e' for attached-earlobe. Genotype (EE) is a homozygous free-earlobe phenotype. Genotype (Ee) is a heterozygous free-earlobe phenotype. Genotype (ee) is a homozygous attached ear-lobe phenotype. Let us assume that the father has genotype (EE) and the mother has genotype (Ee), then, 50 percent of the children will be homozygous for free-earlobe (EE) and another 50 percent heterozygous for free-earlobe (Ee). They will all have free-earlobes, but 50 percent will be carriers for attached-earlobes. Where both parents are heterozygous for free-earlobe (Ee), 25 percent of the children will be homozygous for free-earlobe (EE), 50 percent will be heterozygous for free-earlobe (Ee), and 25 percent will be homozygous for attached-earlobes (ee). Where both parents are homozygous for free-earlobe (EE), then all the children will be homozygous for free-earlobe (EE). If both parents are homozygous for attached-earlobe (ee), then all the children will be homozygous (ee) for attached-earlobe.

It is important to mention that the two simple examples given above, only involve two forms of the same gene, while other characteristics are more complex. For example, eye colour is a diverse trait with a wide range of pigment colours and patterns possible and is controlled by more than one gene (Waugh & Grant 2014:443). For the purposes of this study, I will explain a complex situation using skin colour.

Inheritance of skin colour is an example of what is known as *polygenic* inheritance. In this form of inheritance, characteristics are determined by the interaction of genes at several different loci (on different chromosomes or at different places on a single chromosome). Genetic heterogeneity refers to the fact that a phenotypic characteristic can be determined by many different alleles for a particular characteristic (Enger & Ross 2003:181). Some geneticists have opined that genes for skin colour are located at a minimum of three loci. At each of these loci, the allele for a dark skin is dominant over the allele for a light skin. Therefore, a wide variety of skin colours is possible depending on how many dark-skin alleles are present. For very light-skinned people, there is no dark-skin gene, whereas for very dark people there are 6 dark-skin genes. For very light-skinned people the loci are (d1, d1), (d2, d2), and (d3, d3), whereas for very dark-skinned people, the loci are (D1, D1), (D2, D2), and (D3, D3).

My family is an interesting African family, where I have quite a light-brown skin, and my wife's skin is not as light-brown as mine, but she is not what I can call a very dark-skinned African woman. Our first-born son is as light-brown as I am. Now that I am growing older, my son looks lighter than I am. Our second-born daughter is slightly light-skinned. Our last-born son is slightly light-skinned, but not as light as our daughter. It is interesting that our last-born son is not even as light as his mother, but still he is not what I can call a very dark-skinned person. Before I started this study, I could not explain why this is so. However, now I greatly appreciate the role genes play in inheritance. Recently, my first-born son asked me why we are not as dark-skinned as other Africans are. I told him that that can only be explained genetically. My father was quite light-skinned. My mother was quite light-skinned, but not as light as my father. My wife's father had a very light-skinned father, and quite a light-skinned mother. Her mother was not light, but she was not very

dark. A combination of genes at three loci as suggested by some geneticists may explain the variation of skin colour in my nuclear family. I am, however, not able to tell where I am. Geneticists give the following possible combinations of skin colour: (locus 1: d1d1; locus 2: d2d2; and locus 3: d3d3); (locus 1: d1D1; locus 2: d2d2; and locus 3: d3d3); (locus 1: d1D1; locus 2: d2D2; and locus 3: d3d3); (locus 1: D1D1; locus 2: D2d2; and locus 3: d3d3); (locus 1: D1d1; locus 2: D2d2; and locus 3: D3D3); (locus 1: D1d1; locus 2: D2D2; and locus 3: D3D3); and (locus 1: D1D1; locus 2: D2D2; and locus 3: D3D3).

A man who has stopped believing in what the Bible teaches, told me that God did not create all people from one person, as the Bible suggests (Acts 17:26), but light-skinned people were created the way they are, and dark-skinned people were also created the way they are. He asked: 'If indeed God created all people from one person, then why do we have this variety of skin colours?' As I have noted, while this is a very difficult question, genetic inheritance seems to explain this variety.

Enger and Ross (2003:181) assert that polygenic inheritance is very common in determining characteristics that are quantitative in nature. In the skin colour example, I have given above, and in many others as well, the characteristics cannot be characterised in terms of *either/or*, but the variation in phenotypes can be classified as *how much* or *what amount*. For instance, people show great variations in height. We cannot describe them as either short or tall, for there is a wide range. It is possible that this quantitative trait is determined by a number of different genes. Another quantitative trait is intelligence. It varies significantly, from those who are severely retarded to those who are geniuses. It is possible, of course, that these traits may be influenced by outside environmental factors such as diet, disease, accident, and social factors.

There is the question of why a certain character trait expresses itself, while the other does not. This has to do with the aspects of genes being either dominant or recessive. For instance, in order for an offspring to be a tongue roller, at least one parent must have a gene that is dominant over the other. In general, if an individual inherits a tongue-rolling gene from one parent and a non-rolling gene from the other, he/she will be able to roll



his/her tongue. The reason for this is that the tongue-rolling form of the gene is *dominant*, and takes priority over the non-rolling gene, which is *recessive* (Waugh & Grant 2014:444). The non-rolling gene only expresses itself when it is inherited in a homozygous form (tt).

It is interesting to note that dark-skinned parents may produce a child who is lighter than they are if, for instance, both parents have a gene combination (locus 1: D1d1; locus 2: D2D2; and locus 3: D3D3). What this may suggest is that both parents had parents who had genotypes for light skin. In terms of height, an interesting case is found in my nuclear family in which my wife is shorter than I am – she just reaches my shoulders. Our first-born son is taller than I am. Without this knowledge of genetics, it would be difficult to explain how my son could be taller than I am.

It is possible that in some traits there can be more than two alleles that code for that trait, while more than one allele can be dominant (Waugh & Grant 2014:444). A good example of this is the inheritance of A and B type antigens on the surface of red blood cells, determined clinically as the ABO system of blood grouping. In this case, there are three possible alleles: one allele codes for production of 'A' type antigens (A), another allele codes for production of 'B' type antigens (B), and a third allele codes for no antigen (o). Thus, an individual may have any combination of two of these three alleles: AA, AB, BB, Ao, Bo, or oo. Both A and B are dominant, and both express themselves wherever they are present. Geneticists call this *co-dominance*. O is recessive and only expresses itself in a homozygous recessive genotype. What this means is that people who have an oo genotype have neither A nor B antigens on their red cell surface and are blood group O. Since both A and B are dominant, an individual with genotype AB has both A and B antigens on the red blood surface, and is blood group AB. An individual with genotype Ao or AA has only 'A' type antigens and is blood group A. Individuals with genotype Bo or BB have only B antigens and are blood group B.

If the paternal genes are AB and the maternal genes are Ao, the children will have blood types AA, AB, Ao, or Bo. Since O is recessive, no child will have blood group O. The

blood phenotypes will be 50 percent (A), 25 percent (AB) and 25 per cent (B). There is something known as sex-linked inheritance.

#### **10.3.4.2 Sex-linked Inheritance**

I noted above that the Y chromosome is much shorter than the X chromosome. Therefore, it should not surprise us to find that the Y chromosome carries only 86 genes compared with the X chromosome's 2,000. This explains why the vast majority of genes on the X-chromosome are not matched on the Y-chromosome. What this means is that a male has only one copy of most of the genes on his sex chromosomes. Geneticists have called traits, coded for on the section of the X chromosome that has no corresponding material on the Y, sex-linked. This is how sex-linked inheritance takes place. One example of this is the gene that codes for normal colour vision and is therefore carried on the X chromosome only. This is the dominant form of the gene. I must mention that there is a rare, recessive form of this gene, which is faulty and codes for red-green colour blindness (Waugh & Grant 2014:445). Therefore, if a female inherits a faulty copy of the gene, she is statistically likely to have a normal gene on her other X chromosome, giving her normal colour vision. It is noteworthy that a female carrying the colour blindness gene, even though she is not colour blind, may pass the faulty gene on to her children and is said to be a *carrier*. It should be observed that if the gene is abnormal in a male, he will be colour-blind because, having only one X-chromosome, he has only one copy of the gene. If a man who is not colour-blind marries a woman who has a colour-blind gene, or is a carrier (XX'), there is a 50 percent chance of a son being colour-blind, a 50 percent chance of a son having normal vision, a 50 percent chance of a daughter being a carrier (with normal vision herself), and a 50 percent chance of a daughter being normal.

Since I am discussing genetics in human beings who have been affected by Adam's original sin in the sense of inheriting the tendency to sin, and in some cases, even genetic abnormalities, it is important that I discuss gene mutations.

### **10.3.5 Gene Mutations and Abnormalities**

Waugh and Grant (2014:440) state that the term 'mutation' refers to an inheritance alteration in the normal genetic make-up of the cell. It has been argued that many mutations occur spontaneously, because of the countless millions of DNA replications and cell divisions that normally occur throughout life. However, other mutations may be caused by external factors, such as X-rays, ultraviolet rays or exposure to certain chemicals. It is interesting to note that most mutations are immediately repaired by an army of enzymes present in the cell nucleus and therefore cause no permanent problems. However, some mutations are lethal, because they disrupt some essential cellular functions, causing cell death, while the mutations are destroyed along with the cell. Sometimes the mutated cell is detected by immune cells and destroyed because it is abnormal. Studies have shown that other mutations do not kill the cell but alter its function in some way that may cause a disease, such as cancer. It is noteworthy that a persistent mutation in the genome that has not led to cell death can be passed from parent to child and may cause an inherited disease, such as phenylketonuria or cystic fibrosis (Waugh & Grant 2014:440).

It should be noted that gene related diseases such as haemophilia, are passed on directly from parent to child through a faulty gene. Geneticists have located many of these genes by mapping the human genome, for example, the gene for cystic fibrosis is carried on chromosome 7 (Waugh & Grant 2014:446). Diseases such as asthma, some cancers and cardiovascular disease, have a genetic component, which runs in the family. In these cases, however, a single faulty gene has not been identified, while inheritance is not as predictable as when a single gene is responsible. In this case, the likelihood of an individual developing the disease depends, not only on their genetic make-up, but also on the influence of other factors, such as lifestyle and environment.

#### **10.3.5.1 Mitochondrial Abnormalities**

It has been observed that mitochondrial DNA contains 37 genes. Defects in these genes can cause inherited disorders with a very wide range of potentially fatal signs and symptoms, mostly involving the central nervous system (CNS) and skeletal or cardiac muscle

(Waugh & Grant 2014:447). Studies have indicated that spontaneous mutations in this DNA can also occur in maturity, leading to the onset of a disease in adults. Studies have also shown that mitochondrial mutations may be associated with some forms of important diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, Parkinson disease and Alzheimer disease.

### **10.3.5.2 Chromosomal Abnormalities**

It sometimes happens that a fault during meiosis produces a gamete carrying abnormal chromosomes – too many, too few, abnormally shaped, or with segments missing. It often happens that these aberrations are lethal and a pregnancy involving such a gamete miscarries in the early stages. There are, of course, non-lethal conditions, which include Down syndrome and the cri-du-chat syndrome.

#### *10.3.5.2.1 Down Syndrome*

Down syndrome is a disorder in which there are three copies of chromosome 21 (trisomy 21), which means that an extra chromosome is present, caused by a failure of chromosomes to separate normally during meiosis (Waugh & Grant 2014:447). A person with Down syndrome is usually short of stature, with pronounced eyelid folds and flat round face. Another feature is that the person's tongue may be too large for the mouth and habitually protrudes. Also present in such a person is a learning disability, which may range from mild to severe. In terms of life expectancy, it is shorter than normal, with a higher than average incidence of cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and a high incidence of early dementia. Studies indicate that Down syndrome is associated with increasing maternal age, especially over 35 years.

#### *10.3.5.2.2 Cri-du-chat Syndrome*

This syndrome refers to the characteristic meowing cry of an affected child. Geneticists suggest that it is caused when a part of chromosome 5 is missing, and is associated with learning disabilities and anatomical abnormalities, which include gastrointestinal and cardiovascular problems (Waugh & Grant 2014:447).

a) *Abnormalities of the sex chromosomes*

Abnormalities in the sex chromosomes happen if these sex chromosomes fail to separate normally during meiosis. In this case, the daughter cells will have an incorrect number, either too many or too few. The effect of this is that a child born with such an abnormality will not follow a normal sexual development without treatment and may have additional problems such as a learning disability.

The abnormality associated with having only one sex chromosome, an X, as well as 22 normal pairs of autosomes, is called Turner syndrome. The karyotype is therefore usually XO, and the affected individual is female. This individual has female external genitalia and ovaries but is infertile because the ovaries fail to develop during the foetal life, and secondary sexual characteristics do not develop at puberty unless oestrogen treatment is given (Waugh & Grant 2014:447). A short stature and coarctation of the aorta will be observed in such an individual. Research studies indicate that the intelligence is usually normal.

A condition, in which the karyotype is XXY, is called Klinefelter syndrome, and the affected individual is male, with 47 chromosomes instead of 46 (Waugh & Grant 2014:447). Research studies show that this condition is more common than Turner syndrome, and is associated with a greater than average height and mild learning disability. The external genitalia are male, but the testes are underdeveloped and the affected individual is infertile. What happens at puberty is that there is a development of feminine characteristics such as enlarged breasts (gynaecomastia) and rounded hips, and there is no development of male secondary characteristics unless testosterone treatment is given.

### **10.3.6 Ageing and DNA**

A cumulative exposure over a lifetime to potential mutagens as well as a diminishing ability to repair DNA, means that the cell's genome gradually accumulates mutations, which can lead to a diminished function and increased risk to disease, such as cancer (Waugh & Grant 2014:445). Studies have shown that mitochondrial DNA is more prone

to mutations than nuclear DNA, and as it ages and develops 'tear and wear' damage, it causes progressive impairment of cell function.

Studies have revealed that the number of times a cell can divide, is somewhere between 50 and 60 divisions (Waugh & Grant 2014:445). It is supposed that one important factor in this relates to the effects of ageing on telomerase function. Telomerase is the enzyme that repairs the telomeres (chromosome tips) following DNA replication. This enzyme declines in function as a person ages. It means that it restricts the number of cell replications possible, since without effective telomerase activity, the chromosomes become increasingly shorter with each division and eventually become too short to be replicated, with the implication that the cell can no longer divide. Since the cells can no longer divide, a person reaches a point where they are not strong enough to continue living. Thus, death takes place.

### **10.3.7 The Incarnation/Virginal Conception and Genetics**

Genetic studies have so far only given us information that applies to inheritance in asexual and sexual reproduction. Apart from this, genetic studies only deal with the physical aspects of inheritance. These physical aspects, of course, include mental related characteristics such as intelligence. It is noteworthy also that, generally, genetics is studied from the evolutionary point of view. This means that we should not expect to find any help when it comes to the biblical claim that the second Person of the Godhead was incarnated (John 1:1-3, 14).

#### **10.3.7.1 The Incarnation/Virginal Conception**

Up to the time of the incarnation, nobody has ever heard of a child who was born without the involvement of a male factor. Thus, the incarnation is indeed a mystery, of which attempts to explain it scientifically are in vain.

##### *10.3.7.1.1 Scriptural Evidence*

When the incarnation was about to take place, the angel Gabriel said to the virgin Mary: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you;

therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). To Joseph, Gabriel related: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His Name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:20-21). These are the only NT texts that tell us that Mary conceived without the involvement of a male factor.

#### *10.3.7.1.2 Early Church Tradition*

Apart from the NT evidence that the virginal conception took place, there is also the testimony of the early church tradition. It is true that this tradition does not in itself establish the virginal conception. However, it is the type of evidence we would expect if the doctrine is true (Erickson 2013:681). When it comes to the virginal conception in the early church tradition, we begin with the apostles' creed. It is important to note that the form now in use was produced in Gaul in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century, but its roots go back to an old Roman baptismal confession. It is affirmed in its earlier as well as its later form (cf. McGiffert 1902:122-128). Erickson (2013:682) conveys that 'shortly after the middle of the second century, the early form was already in use, not only in Rome, but by Tertullian in North Africa and Irenaeus in Gaul and Asia Minor'. The presence of the doctrine of the virginal conception in an early confession of the important Church of Rome is highly significant, especially since such a creed would not have incorporated any new doctrine (Machen 1930:4, 27).

#### *10.3.7.1.3 Objections to the Virginal Conception*

Some scholars have raised objections to the virginal conception. I will briefly discuss these objections.

##### *a) Ignorance regarding the virginal conception among the NT Jews*

In the NT there does seem to be a lot of ignorance among the Jews regarding the virginal conception. What complicates matters is the fact that the news about the incarnation was communicated to only Mary and Joseph. Of course, the Holy Spirit communicated the good news to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45). When Jesus was born, shepherds were told about

it by angels and they went to see him, after which they shared the good news with others (Luke 2:8-20). The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he was not going to die until he had seen Jesus (Luke 2:25-35). The prophetess Anna testified that Mary's child was the Redeemer (Luke 2:36-38).

In my view, the Jews had an opportunity to know about the incarnation or at least the virginal conception, for an OT prophecy had pointed to it (cf. Is 7:14). However, by the time of the incarnation, they had become so preoccupied with expectations about liberation from Roman oppression that a Messiah like Jesus Christ was not welcome. When He was born in Bethlehem, they did not even know about it (cf. Matt 2:1-12). Even when the wise men from the East came to Jerusalem and told them about His star, they referred to Micah's prophecy (Mic 5:2) but did not go out to look for Him. At His baptism, God the Father said about Him: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matt 3:17). Despite this testimony, there was an ignorance in Israel about the Messiah. When Jesus Christ began His public ministry, the people of His own city, Nazareth, asked: 'Is this not Joseph's son?' (Luke 4:22). The Jews queried Jesus: 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, "I have come down from heaven"?' (John 6:42). They saw Him as merely a son of Mary and Joseph, stating: 'Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?' (Matt 13:55-56).

Because the Jews were ignorant about the incarnation, they did not accept Jesus' assertion: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM' (John 8:58), which they understood to be a claim to be God. The Bible relates: 'Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by' (John 8:59). When He declared: 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30), the 'Jews took up stones again to stone Him' (John 10:31). When He asked them why they wanted to stone Him, they responded: 'For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, and because you, being a man, make yourself God' (John 10:33).



Thus, it is important that, as we discuss the virginal conception, we should remind ourselves that there was so much ignorance about it even among God's chosen people, the Jews. However, this ignorance does not prove that it did not take place. The two NT texts that tell us that it did indeed take place are sufficient.

*b) The virginal conception precludes full humanity*

Another objection that has been raised against the virginal conception relates to the possibility of it precluding full humanity. Thus, some scholars have questioned whether Jesus was fully human if He had but one human parent (cf. Brown 1973:56-61).

Erickson (2013:685-686) has, however, noted that this confuses the essence of humanity with the process that transfers it from one generation to another. Scholars who make this objection, are forgetting that Adam and Eve did not have a human father or mother, yet they were fully human. In the case of Adam, there was no prior human from whom his human nature could have been taken. Thus, in the creation of Adam and Eve, God supplied everything needed for them to be male and female.

Erickson goes further to assert that, in Jesus Christ's case, God created a sperm. He argues that Jesus was not produced after Mary's genetic pattern alone, for in that case He would in effect have been a clone of her and would necessarily have been female. He states that 'a sperm was united with the ovum provided by Mary, but it was specially created for the occasion instead of being supplied by an existent male human' (Erickson 2013:686).

Some scholars have responded to this objection by suggesting that Jesus was Mary's 'genetic twin'. Kozuh (2013) writes to Taylor Marshall, suggesting that Jesus and Mary were identical twins, since Jesus was made from the DNA of Mary just as Eve was made from the DNA of Adam. Marshall (2013) responds by arguing that our Lord Jesus Christ would not necessarily be a male clone or 'genetic twin' of Mary. He opines that the Holy Spirit provided extra genetic material which combined with the genetic code of Mary: 'In modern terminology, the Holy Spirit added something to the genetic material of Mary at

the conception of Christ...The biological code that would have come from the biological father was somehow supernaturally supplied by the Holy Spirit, for example, the Y chromosome' (Marshall 2013). In his view, Jesus could not have been male if the Holy Spirit did not add something. This being the case, Jesus would not have been the 'genetic twin' of Mary. It is possible to think of their genetic code as being similar, but not identical.

While Erickson suggests that God created a sperm for the occasion of the incarnation, Marshall opines that God supplied the biological code that would have come from the biological father. In other words, in Marshall's view, God did not necessarily create a sperm for the occasion of the incarnation.

*c) The virginal conception has parallels in other religions*

It has been argued that the biblical accounts of the virginal conception are nothing more than an adaptation of similar accounts occurring in the literature of other religions (Erickson 2013:686). For example, Plutarch suggests that a woman can be impregnated when approached by a divine *pneuma* (Plutarch, *Numa* 4.4.; cf. Erickson 2013:686). It is noteworthy that this remark occurs in Plutarch's retelling of the legend of Numa who, after the death of his wife withdrew into solitude to have intercourse with the divine being Egeria. Stories are not absent about how Zeus begat Hercules, Perseus, and Alexander and of Apollo's begetting Ion, Asclepius, Pythagoras, Plato, and Augustus (Erickson 2013:686).

Note should be made, however, that these myths are nothing more than stories about fornication between divine and human beings, which are radically different from the biblical accounts of the virginal conception (Erickson 2013:686). In this light, Moody (1962:791) comments: 'The yawning chasm between these pagan myths of polytheistic promiscuity and the lofty monotheism of the virgin birth of Jesus is too wide for careful research to cross'. It will be observed that the similarity is far less than the differences. It can thus be argued that the idea that pagan myths might have been incorporated into the Gospel accounts is far from being true. Therefore, this idea should be rejected (cf. Erickson 2013:686).

Some scholars have connected the biblical accounts about the virginal conception with Judaism. In their view, the accounts in Matthew and Luke are too Jewish to have allowed any direct pagan influence (Erickson 2013:686). The proponents of this variant theory argue that, in Judaism there was an expectation of the virgin conception. It has also been contended that Judaism had picked up the idea of the virgin conception from paganism and incorporated it. It was then transmitted into the Christian document in its Judaized form (Erickson 2013:686).

Erickson (2013:686) argues that the problem with the above theory is that there is no substantial evidence that Judaism espoused a belief in the virginal conception. Although there was much ignorance among the Jews about Jesus Christ's time of the virginal conception, it would appear that the theory has been constructed on the presupposition that virginal conception is a pagan idea and that, since it would not have been accepted directly, it must have come to Christianity through Judaism. This being the case, it is assumed that such a belief must have existed in Judaism.

I do not personally agree with Erickson's opinion that there is no substantial evidence that Judaism espoused a belief in the virginal conception. The prophet Isaiah had long before the incarnation predicted that a virgin would conceive and bear a Son (cf. Is 7:14). When Herod asked the Jews about where the Messiah was to be born, they pointed to Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-8; cf. Mic 5:2). With respect to the announcement the angel Gabriel made to Joseph about the incarnation, Matthew conveys that it was done to fulfil Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Matt 1:22-23). Thus, while there was *deliberate* ignorance among the Jews about the virginal conception, it is wrong to suggest that there is no substantial evidence that Judaism espoused a belief in the virginal conception. Had the Jews applied themselves to a serious and unbiased study of the Holy Scriptures, they would have had a knowledge of the virginal conception.

Having pointed out my disagreement with Erickson, I need to mention that he is discussing a theory, which conveys that the biblical accounts about the virginal conception are nothing more than an adaptation of similar accounts occurring in the literature of

other religions. This theory is actually an objection to the concept of the virginal conception. He is not suggesting that Christianity did not know about the virginal conception; instead he is conveying that some scholars have argued that Christianity must have received the concept of the virginal conception from paganism via Judaism. He, however, fails to give a conclusive rebuttal to the objection by conveying that there is no substantial evidence that Judaism espoused a belief of the virginal conception.

Fact, however, is that the Christological debates of the first five centuries of the Christian era, discussed above, suggest that the concept of the virginal conception came into Christianity through a study of the Holy Scriptures. The early Christians studied the Gospel accounts and were able to formulate a Christian understanding of the virginal conception based on Matthew's and Luke's accounts (cf. Matt 1:18-21; Luke 1:26-38). The Christological debates of the first five centuries, which I have reviewed in chapter four reveal this fact.

*d) The virginal conception is incompatible with the pre-existence of Jesus Christ*

It has been argued that the idea of the virginal conception cannot be reconciled with the clear and definite evidence of the pre-existence of Jesus (Erickson 2013:687). The contention is that, if we hold the one, we cannot hold the other, for it is not possible that one who existed before Mary, could be said to have been born of her. Pannenberg (1968:143) has given the most articulate recent statement of this objection.

The answer to this could be found in the orthodox Christian understanding, arguing that Jesus Christ was fully divine and fully human (Erickson 2013:687). His pre-existence therefore related to His divinity, while the virginal conception related to His humanity. The Word, the second Person of the Godhead, existed from eternity. He said to the Jews, while in His human form: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM' (John 8:58). The Jews understood this to be a reference to Yahweh, their covenant-making God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex 3:14). This God who has always existed, at some finite point in time, assumed humanity, and was born as the Man, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, there is no reason why the pre-existence and virginal conception

should be in conflict if one believes that there was a genuine incarnation at the beginning of Jesus' earthly life. Piper (1964:132) argues that the Church Fathers, particularly Tatian and the Valentinian gnostics, thought of the pre-existence of Jesus and the virginal conception in tandem as he contends: 'While in the writings of John and Paul the pre-existence of Jesus is practically a substitute of the Virgin Birth, it serves in those fathers as evidence of the preexistence'. The preexistence of Jesus therefore did not preclude the virginal conception. Note should be made, however, that the virginal conception can only be accepted by faith – there is no reason why the pre-existence and virginal conception should be in conflict if one believes that there was a genuine incarnation at the beginning of Jesus' earthly life (Piper 1964:132; cf. Erickson 2013:687).

*e) The idea of the virginal conception conflicts with natural law*

A fundamental resistance to the possibility of miracles and the intrusion of the supernatural into the realm of history results in an objection to the virginal conception (Erickson 2013:687). The natural order of things requires that, for conception to take place, there should be sexual intercourse involving a male and a female. Of course, modern science has made artificial insemination possible. Whatever the case, however, conception requires fertilisation of the female egg by the male sperm. Therefore, objectors to the virginal conception argue that, since Mary did not have intercourse with any man as the Bible states (Luke 1:34), there was no such a thing as a virginal conception. Historically then, a man called Jesus of Nazareth did exist. However, this man was born the normal way. In other words, Mary got married to Joseph and the two had intercourse, which resulted in the fertilisation of Mary's egg by Joseph's sperm to produce Jesus. It is thought that the accounts, which suggest that there was a virginal conception, do not really belong to the NT. Thus, they should be removed from the NT.

It should be observed, however, that a rejection of the virginal conception is a rejection of the whole plan of salvation. In fact, a rejection of the virginal conception is a rejection of the message of the entire NT, for if the accounts that speak of the virginal conception do not belong to the NT, then the entire message becomes null and void.

At this point we will discuss the issue of how the laws of genetics applied to Jesus. This is important, because the laws of heredity require the involvement of both the male and female genetic factors.

#### **10.3.7.2 The Incarnation and Genetics**

God took humanity upon His divine nature (John 1:1-3, 14; Phil 2:5-8). In other words, He added humanity to His divinity. The entrance of Jesus Christ into this world was not in the natural way that all of us have entered this world. In our case, a father and mother decided to have a child (or in some cases, they did not, but it happened anyhow), and so they had sexual intercourse. The mother became pregnant, and after nine months of development, the baby/babies was/were born. The mixing of genes from the father and mother created the features in the baby. My height, skin colour, eye colour, intelligence, and other characteristics, were all determined by the mixing of the genes from both my father and my mother. My father was lighter in complexion than my mother, so I know that, in the mixing of genes that determine skin colour, something from my father expressed itself more than that from my mother.

What about the tendency to sin, which I was born with? Was it determined by the mixing of genes from my father and mother? Is there a gene that transmits sin from one generation to another? The books I have studied on genetics have not said anything. This is probably because genetics is studied from the evolutionary point of view. Genetics is also a field within the biological sciences in which the Christian concept of sin is not part of its focus.

Theologians have, however, expressed themselves about sin and genetics. Heppenstall (1977:138), for example, argues that sin is not transmitted genetically, but as a result of humankind's separation from God. Zurcher, on the other hand, argues that recent discoveries in anthropology appear to contradict Heppenstall's hypothesis. He argues: 'According to biblical anthropology human beings are a whole; and if the effects of sin are transferrable, certainly the same should be true of sin as a power' (Zurcher 1999:200).

Naturally, there does not seem to be any question as to whether or not sin as a power is transferrable. The question is: Is it transmitted genetically? Erickson (2013:689) argues:

It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or of guilt from Mary to Jesus. Without that special sanctifying influence, he would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have.

Whichever way, sin as a power is transmitted, Erickson suggests that it would also have applied to Jesus, if the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit was not present. In other words, if the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit was absent, Jesus would have received a depravity from Mary in much the same way that we have received it from our parents. Interestingly, Erickson does not express himself about the genetic transmission of sin.

With regard to how the laws of genetics applied to Jesus, theologians agree that He inherited a weakened physical constitution from Mary. With respect to His physical features, it would appear that theologians are divided. There are some who believe that He was Mary's 'genetic twin', as He was made after Mary's genetic pattern alone (cf. Kozuh 2013). Marshall (2013), however, argues that, supernaturally, God supplied the Y chromosome, so that Jesus had all the features that a male human being has. Adams (1994:56) argues that Jesus developed in Mary's womb for nine months as a regular embryo would and emerged as a helpless, screaming baby in a Bethlehem stable. However, he does not mention how the laws of genetics applied to Jesus. In his view, the development of baby Jesus in Mary's womb is absolutely mind-boggling.

Rodriguez (2016:22) contends: 'The incarnation is not about the biological laws of human conception but about the power of God working through the Spirit'. In other words, he is not willing to delve into the biological intricacies that boggle some theological minds. The incarnation was a cosmic singularity.

Erickson (2013:686) suggests that if God had not created a sperm to fertilise Mary's egg, and Jesus had been produced after her genetic pattern alone, He would have been her clone and would necessarily have been female. To appreciate this argument, it is important to review literature dealing with cloning.

## **10.4 Cloning**

Cloning is a relatively new area of study. As such, literature discussing cloning is scanty. Apart from this, studies in this area are restricted because of ethical reasons. In this study, however, I will not focus on the ethical issues. Clonaid claims to be the pioneering company in human cloning, but for security reasons it does not disclose the name under which it operates (Clonaid.com sa.).

According to Bonsor and Conger (sa.), cloning is a process by which a duplicate of an organism is produced. It occurs naturally in some organisms that reproduce asexually. It is important to note, for the purposes of this study that, when discussing cloning in the sense of doing so to make a duplicate of an organism, a reference is made to reproductive cloning.

### **10.4.1 Some History**

A major breakthrough in cloning studies was the birth of the most famous sheep in history, named Dolly. She was born on 5 July 1996. The mastermind behind her cloning was Ian Wilmut with a group of Scottish scientists. It has been reported that if Dolly would stand beside a naturally conceived sheep, you would not notice any differences between the two. In fact, to tell the only distinguishing factor between the two, you would have to go back to the time of conception, because Dolly's embryo developed without the presence of a sperm. She began as a cell from another sheep that was fused via electricity with a donor egg (Bonsor & Conger sa.).

It is important to note that today, many years since Dolly's birth, human cloning remains in its infancy. Cloning technology has improved, but the process has a slim success rate of 1 to 4 percent (Burton 2005).



An attempt to clone a human being was made in 2001. In January of that year, a small consortium of scientists led by Panayiotis Zavos, a former University of Kentucky professor, and Italian researcher Severino Antinori announced that they planned to clone a human being in two years (Kirby 2001). At about the same time, news surfaced about an American couple who planned to pay \$500,000 to Las Vegas-based Company, Clonaid, for a clone of their deceased daughter (Bonsor & Conger sa.). This venture did not produce documented success.

Enger and Ross (2003:394) report that, in 2001 a group of researchers cloned a human embryo. However, development stopped at an early stage and the embryo died. The two biologists have not indicated where this took place. CNN.com (2003) reports that Clonaid conveys that it has cloned its first boy. Clonaid earlier claimed that it had cloned two girls. Clonaid's latest assertion that it has cloned a baby boy, which was born to a Japanese couple has not been independently verified, meaning that the company's claims have been met with widespread doubts (CNN.com 2003).

In several species (sheep, mice, monkeys, pigs, cows, and dogs) the process has successfully resulted in a cloned offspring that is genetically identical to the individual that donated the nucleus. In 2006, scientists cloned the first primate embryos of a rhesus monkey. In early 2008, the FDA officially deemed milk and meat products from cloned animals and their offspring safe to eat (Bonsor & Conger sa.).

I should mention that despite popular belief, clones are not identical copies of the original despite the use of the same DNA (CNN.com 2003). Experts convey that environment is as important as genes in determining a clone's development. It was announced in Texas in January 2003 that the world's first cloned cat does not resemble the original in looks or personality a year after its birth (CNN.com 2003).

#### **10.4.2 How Cloning Works**

The primary method that scientists use in cloning is somatic cell transfer (SCNT), which is the procedure that was used to clone Dolly, mentioned above. SCNT starts when

doctors take the egg from a female donor and remove its nucleus, creating an enucleated egg (Bonsor & Conger sa.). A cell, which contains DNA, is taken from the animal that is being cloned. Then the enucleated egg is fused together with the cloning subject's cell, using electricity. This creates an embryo, which is implanted into a surrogate mother through in vitro fertilisation (test-tube fertilisation).

If the procedure is successful, then the surrogate mother will give birth to a baby that is a clone of the cloning subject at the end of a normal gestation period. I have already mentioned that the success rate for this type of procedure is small, working in only one or two out of every 100 embryos. In fact, Dolly was the result of 277 previously failed attempts.

The point to note is that the technology for cloning humans is present (Enger & Ross 2003:394). As I have noted, the oocytes can be harvested, the nuclei can be transferred, and the techniques for introducing them into a uterus are well known. There are claims that two girls and a boy have been cloned.

#### **10.4.3 The Incarnation and Cloning**

With regard to Jesus Christ's entrance into this world, the Bible relates: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was going to conceive (Luke 1:31), she asked: 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' (Luke 1:34, NIV). The angel responded: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). That there was no involvement of a male factor in Jesus Christ's conception is confirmed by this statement: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:20-21).

The fact that Jesus Christ was conceived without the involvement of a male factor has led some to speculate that He was Mary's 'genetic twin', because in their view, only Mary's genetic material was involved in producing Him (cf. Kozuh 2013). In other words, it is thought that God cloned Mary. However, the Bible is very clear that Jesus Christ was a male human being. To account for this, Erickson (2013:686) suggests that God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's egg, so that Jesus was not produced after her genetic pattern alone. Thus, in Erickson's view, Jesus was not Mary's clone. This view is supported by Marshall (2013), who argues that God supernaturally contributed the Y chromosome.

In line with the technology currently available for cloning human beings, it can be argued that had God used cloning to produce Jesus, He would have harvested an egg from Mary and removed its nucleus. Then He would have fused the enucleated egg with a cell with genetic material taken from Mary. An embryo would have been created, which God would have implanted into Mary's womb. The embryo would have grown in Mary's womb for nine months and then Jesus would have been born the normal way. As Erickson suggests, Jesus would then have to be female.

Several questions can be asked. Why would God want to clone Mary to produce the Saviour of the world? However, if He did not clone Mary, how did He produce a full male human being without the involvement of a male factor? Is Erickson correct when he suggests that God created a sperm for the incarnation? These questions need to be answered in this study.

## **10.5 Conclusion**

Human beings enter this world through sexual reproduction. An egg from a female is fertilised by a sperm from a male, forming a zygote. The zygote divides into smaller cells by mitosis. These cells become a solid ball, which later gets embedded or implanted in the lining of the uterus. Note should be made that the egg and sperm cells are haploid, which means that they each have 23 chromosomes. The resulting zygote is diploid, which means that it has 46 chromosomes.

22 pairs of chromosomes (22 chromosomes each from both the male and female parents) are called autosomes. The Y and X chromosomes are called sex chromosomes, because they determine the sex of the developing child. A gene is a portion of DNA that determines a characteristic. The mixing of genes, which are found on chromosomes, determines the developing child's physical characteristics such as skin colour, height, eye colour, ability to roll the tongue, and others. Almost every body cell (with the exception of red blood cells and the gametes or sex cells) contains, within its nucleus, an identical copy of the entire complement of the individual's genetic material.

Theologians are divided on the question of whether or not sin as a power or tendency is transmitted genetically. There is, however, an agreement with respect to the transmission of the physical results of sin from one generation to the other. Thus, it is argued that Jesus Christ received from Mary the physical characteristics that every other child of Adam has received.

Some scholars such as Kozuh have argued that, since there was no male factor involved in the conception of Jesus Christ, He was Mary's clone or 'genetic twin'. On the other hand, scholars like Marshall have argued that, when creating Jesus in Mary's womb, God supernaturally supplied the Y chromosome. Erickson asserts that God created a sperm for the occasion of the incarnation.

Scientists have managed to clone some species (monkeys, sheep, dogs, mice, and cows), and there are claims that two girls and one boy have so far been cloned. Does this suggest that God cloned Mary to produce Jesus? Erickson suggests that He did not. He makes this conclusion based on the fact that Jesus was male. Mary's clone would have been identical to her and necessarily female. I will discuss Erickson's arguments when evaluating his Christology.

# **CHAPTER 11**

## **CRITICAL EVALUATION:**

### **THE POSTLAPSARIAN MODEL AS TAUGHT BY JACK SEQUEIRA**

#### **11.1 Introduction**

Sequeira has made significant contributions to Christology. It is for this reason that I begin this evaluation by mentioning the contributions that he has made to Christology. He has not written a book on Systematic Theology. As one reads his works, one is able to appreciate his passion to make the everlasting gospel clear to even people who are not sophisticated theologians. He moves from hamartiology to Christology to soteriology. In his theology, hamartiology informs Christology, which in turn informs soteriology. After pointing out areas where he has made contributions to Christology, I will critique some aspects of his Christology that I think require some refining. This will be followed by my personal views of his Christology. Then I will draw a conclusion.

#### **11.2 Sequeira's Contributions to Christology**

I will look at Sequeira's contributions to Christology in at least six areas: Hamartiology informs Christology; the post-fall view is refined; the uniqueness of Jesus is preserved; the dual problem of sin is dealt with; born-again Christians find comfort in Jesus' temptations; and holy living is possible. In my view, these are very important contributions, especially when I consider the fact that the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity is unpopular among theologians today.

##### **11.2.1 Hamartiology informs Christology**

In Sequeira's theology, hamartiology informs Christology. The nature of sin determined the specific human nature that Jesus was to assume. Sequeira suggests that if sin had not become humankind's problem, there would have been no incarnation. Human beings were created to be what God intended them to be. They constituted the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27), and were not created for the incarnation. Instead, the incarnation was necessitated by their fall. Thus, Jesus took the human nature specifically for the purpose of resolving humankind's sin problem. There is sin with a capital 'S' and sin with a small

's'. Humankind struggles with sin as a tendency and with sin as acts of breaking God's law. When deciding what kind of human nature Jesus had to assume, God considered this dual problem of sin. Thus, at the incarnation, Jesus assumed a fallen human nature, for it was in this nature that He was to deal with sin as a tendency as well as sin as breaking God's law. When the Bible conveys that God 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3), in Sequeira's view, sin as a tendency or law was condemned in the fallen flesh that Jesus assumed. For him it is impossible to think that God could have condemned sin in a flesh which did not have the tendency to sin. Thus, in boldly taking a position that clearly relates sin to the specific human nature that Jesus assumed, Sequeira makes a unique contribution to Christology.

It must be noted, however, that the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity is not unique to Sequeira. There were others before him who taught that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. This view was held as early as the time of Athanasius. In this light, Gulley (2012:607; original emphasis) states:

Athanasius influenced the teachings of the Orthodox Church in the East. Eastern Orthodox theology claims that Christ took our fallen sinful human nature in order to join it to His holy, sinless, divine nature, and His divinity changed that human nature in a process that brought salvation to it (*theosis*).

When one critically analyses Sequeira's Christological language, one finds much in his Christology that is similar to Athanasius' Christology. Thus, Sequeira's major contribution is probably to be found in the aspect of refining the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity.

### **11.2.2 The Post-fall View is Refined**

According to the Eastern theology, Jesus assumed the fallen nature of humanity in order to heal fallen humanity internally (Gulley 2012:432). The fallen humanity is thus deified. Salvation is viewed from mainly a subjective perspective, where the healing from sin takes place in the Person of Jesus Himself. This compromises the objective nature of salvation, where human beings are saved by the holy history of Jesus Christ. In this light, Gulley

avers: 'Traditional theology (Athanasius) taught that Jesus had to assume fallen human nature in order to heal it. This refers to an internal healing, within Jesus Christ, where the divine nature heals the fallen nature. Such a healing doesn't require Jesus' crucifixion to save humans' (Gulley 2012:432).

The Eastern theology is viewed by scholars like Gulley as teaching that Jesus crossed the chasm to become a part of the sin problem. This suggests then, that Jesus was not a sinless Saviour. As a result of this, theologians like Gulley and Erickson have rejected the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Sequeira ascends the Christological platform to refine the post-fall view. He fully believes that Jesus assumed the fallen humanity in the state in which He found it. From His mother, Mary, He inherited the very human nature which has an inherent tendency to sin – He therefore inherited the same corrupt human nature that we all have. However, instead of corrupting Him, the corrupt human nature was made to obey. First, Jesus made that fallen human nature obey God perfectly. This involved a great struggle, for the devil appealed to the desires of the flesh in the fallen humanity that Jesus assumed. Thus, Jesus suffered in the fallen flesh that He assumed when He was tempted (1 Pet 4:1). Second, having perfectly obeyed the requirements of God's law, Jesus went to the cross, where the fallen nature that He assumed died eternally in Him. Note should be made that in Sequeira's view, sin as a tendency, which all human beings are born with, had to be assumed by Jesus in order for it to be removed. This is what is meant when Paul stated that God 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3) – God condemned sin in the fallen human flesh that Jesus assumed. Then, sins (plural) were vicariously laid on Jesus. He bore these sins because He had already taken us into Himself at the incarnation. True baptism means identifying ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Thus, in Sequeira's Christology we have a Jesus who assumes the fallen human nature, which He saves by both making it perfectly obey God's requirements of the law and dying the second death. Unlike the Eastern theology, Sequeira's theology has the cross of Jesus at the centre of salvation. The incarnation did not save humanity. Jesus' obedience

did not save humanity. The incarnation combined with Jesus' obedience qualified Him to be the fallen humanity's substitute. The cross was needed to save the fallen humanity. By His obedience, He met the positive requirements of God's law and by His death He met the demands of justice. Both of these were required in order for humankind to be saved.

Sequeira's Christology makes it clear that Jesus' holy history included His resurrection. The greatest proof that Jesus never committed sin in the fallen human nature He assumed, was His resurrection. Since He did not commit sin, our sins, which caused His eternal death, could not hold Him in the grave. The human nature He assumed died eternally because, in the first place, it was not the human nature which God initially created in Adam – it was the fallen nature. The fallen human nature belongs to the grave, and to the grave Jesus took it. All our sins were laid on Him and so He paid the penalty for those sins. Jesus, however, also had an inherent eternal life, being a divine Person. Thus, the fallen human nature which died eternally, received eternal life by the action of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came out of the grave with a perfected and glorified human nature. The law of sin (tendency to sin), having died eternally on the cross, was removed through the resurrection. Jesus now bears a human flesh like that of the unfallen Adam, albeit with the marks of nails still on His body, for He will use them to teach the science of salvation to the universe throughout eternity.

In my view, Sequeira has refined the post-fall view, which was taught early in Christian theology. He has removed certain aspects from it that do not have biblical support. In so doing, he has proven that one can hold the post-fall view of Athanasius without necessarily subscribing to his theory of internal healing in the Person of Jesus. Sequeira suggests that the humanity that Jesus assumed, received sanctification during the time of His existence on earth. This was through His obedience. In Sequeira's Christology, the cross is best understood within the context of the post-fall view of the human nature of Jesus.



Sequeira preserves the uniqueness of Jesus, which is another contribution he has made to Christology within the context of the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature. This is not easy to achieve, for the post-fall human nature has an inherent tendency to sin. How did Jesus take the post-fall human nature and not be a sinner in need of a saviour? In what follows, I present Jesus Christ's uniqueness, which is preserved in Sequeira's Christology.

### **11.2.3 The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ is Preserved**

While holding the view that Jesus took the post-fall nature of humanity, Sequeira preserves the uniqueness of Jesus. This is another very important contribution that he makes to Christology. I say this, because scholars who reject the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus argue that the post-fall view puts Jesus in the category of sinners with the rest of humanity. A good example is Gulley's criticism of the post-fall view as noted in chapter 9 of this thesis.

It is important, however, to ask: How does Sequeira preserve the uniqueness of Jesus? First, he argues that Jesus was unique in the sense that He was the only being who was both God and a human being at the same time. Jesus was not two persons in one Person, but one Person with two natures. Jesus was fully God and fully human. Thus, Sequeira is in perfect accord with the creed of Chalcedon. Second, Sequeira argues that Jesus was not born *in sin*, for His conception was unique. Through the incarnation, He became what He was, not by right: a fallen human being. He had always been God by nature. Now He also became a human being. The terms 'became', 'took', 'assumed', and 'was made', differentiate Jesus from the rest of humanity. We are human beings by nature and nothing else. We did not *become* human beings; we were *born* human beings. We will also not become God. Therefore, as Jesus assumed a fallen human nature, He belongs to a category of His own.

There is a third sense in which Jesus is unique in Sequeira's Christology: When He was tempted in the same way that the fallen humanity is tempted, He did not succumb to temptation. He did not allow His mind to give in to the desires of the fallen human flesh

that He had assumed. Thus, He did not commit sin in thought, word, and action. All other human beings have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus alone changed the history of fallen human beings by being the only person to ever live in a fallen human flesh without committing any sin. There will never appear a human being who will hate sin as Jesus did. However, how does Sequeira deal with the argument that the post-fall view makes Jesus a sinner in need of redemption?

Since human beings are born in need of salvation, critics of the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, such as Gulley, argue that this view makes Jesus to be a sinner Himself in need of salvation. However, Sequeira responds by observing that, while He took our fallen human nature upon His divine nature, Jesus did not become a sinner, because He just took our fallen human nature in order to redeem it. We partake of the divine nature when we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord (2 Pet 1:4). When we partake of the divine nature, we do not inherently become divine. In the same way, when Jesus assumed the fallen human nature, He did not inherently become fallen. He took the fallen human nature to make it obey God's requirements and to eventually take it to the cross to be impaled. He assumed the fallen human nature in order to save it.

There is another way in which Sequeira makes a contribution to Christology. This is in the area of how Jesus dealt with the dual problem of sin.

#### **11.2.4 The Dual Problem of Sin is Adequately Dealt with**

Many works on Christology that I have read do not portray the way in which Jesus dealt with the dual problem of sin clearly. However, Sequeira makes a unique contribution in this area of Christology in the sense that He portrays Jesus who identified Himself fully with our fallen human nature, except in sin in thought, word, and action. I have already pointed out that, in Sequeira's Christology, Jesus has assumed a fallen corporate humanity. The fallen corporate humanity obeyed in Him, after which the fallen corporate humanity died on the cross in Him. Then, the fallen corporate humanity rose from the grave with a glorified humanity. This is how Jesus dealt with sin as a tendency that all human beings are born with. Jesus Himself did not commit sin. Thus, the sins we commit were laid on

Him and He bore them vicariously on the cross. In my Master of Theology (MTh) dissertation in Systematic Theology (Mwale 2015:121), I alluded to the fact that Sequeira teaches that Jesus' death was both *vicarious* and *actual*. It was *vicarious* in the sense in which Jesus dealt with sin, as what we do as a result of having the tendency to sin. It was *actual* in the sense in which Jesus dealt with sin as nature. This puts Sequeira in a category of his own among those who espouse the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity. When one reads Sequeira's works, one may not easily see this position of his, for he does not categorically state it. One has to decipher this information through a survey of all his works on Christology. I had to survey all his Christological works before I could come up with the conclusion that he teaches the vicarious and actual views of Jesus' death. As already noted, this is the way he is able to explain how Jesus dealt with the dual problem of sin.

Sequeira gives hope to the sinner who struggles with sin, while avoiding the heresy of 'holy flesh' or 'perfectionism'. This he does by teaching that Jesus was tempted in the fallen human nature that He assumed.

#### **11.2.5 Born-again Christians Find Comfort in Jesus' Temptations**

This is another important area of Christology in which Sequeira makes a unique contribution. Born-again human beings are tempted in their fallen human flesh as the devil appeals to the desires of their fallen human nature. There is a fight between the desires of their flesh and the Holy Spirit who dwells in them (cf. Gal 5:16, 17). This struggle continues throughout life. Born-again fallen human beings only have hope in the second coming of Jesus when their fallen nature will be taken away from them. In the meantime, how do Jesus' temptations give them hope? How is Jesus their example?

In identifying the human nature of Jesus with that of the rest of human beings, except in *sinning*, Sequeira has given hope to born-again Christians who get tempted in their fallen human flesh. Fallen human beings have to first enter into a saving relationship with Jesus, and maintaining their faith relationship with Him, they have to look up to Him as their example in resisting temptation. Jesus was tempted just as born-again fallen human beings are tempted (Heb 4:15). He experienced the same struggle that they experience

when they are tempted. More than that, He had an inherent divinity in Himself, which He could have easily appealed to, but which He did not. This means that His struggles were more than born-again fallen human beings will ever be called upon to experience. The fact that He did not yield to temptation means that He experienced their full force. Born-again fallen human beings have at times yielded to temptation and therefore have not experienced its full force. Thus, they have a complete comfort in the temptations of Jesus Christ. This necessarily leads to another of Sequeira's contributions: A holy living is possible in our fallen human flesh.

#### **11.2.6 Holy Living is Possible in Fallen Human Flesh**

Since Jesus overcame temptation in the fallen human flesh He assumed, He demonstrated that a holy living is possible in this life. Therefore, born-again fallen human beings have hope of living holy lives as they maintain a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. They do not overcome temptations by imitating Jesus, they overcome it by maintaining a faith relationship with Him. Sequeira has proven through his Christology that born-again human beings can avoid the heresy of 'holy flesh' or 'perfectionism', while maintaining the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature. This, to me, is a very unique contribution to Christology, because scholars who reject the post-fall view claim that the post-fall view is responsible for legalistic views of salvation. It is possible to teach that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature, while at the same time avoiding the trap of 'sinless' or 'absolute' perfection. In fact, Sequeira categorically condemns the legalistic presentation of the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity. He observes that those who turn to be legalistic in their presentation of the post-fall view are those who teach it in the context of Jesus as our example (Sequeira 1996:113).

There are areas in Sequeira's Christology, however, that need refining or clarification. It is to these areas that I now turn my attention.

### **11.3 Problematic Areas in Sequeira's Post-fall View**

In dealing with what I have called 'problematic areas in Sequeira's Christology', I will point out a particular area and discuss it in light of Scripture. I also suggest how that particular area could be refined.

#### **11.3.1 Jesus Christ as God and Man**

Sequeira has the conviction that Jesus was God and Man – one Person with two natures. As already noted, he is in accord with the creed of Chalcedon. He is also in perfect harmony with Scripture. Nevertheless, he makes this statement: 'At the incarnation, Christ's divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity that needed redeeming, so that Christ was both God and man at the same time' (Sequeira 1996:164). The question that Sequeira should be asked is: Was it the uniting of Jesus' divinity to our *corporate humanity that needed redeeming* that made Him both God and man at the same time? Would Jesus not become both God and man at the same time if His divinity had been united with a corporate unfallen humanity?

In my view, Jesus would have become both God and man at the same time if His divinity had been united to corporate unfallen humanity. Sequeira would agree with me on this point. Nevertheless, it would appear that, since Sequeira is promoting the postlapsarian view in his book, he has not realised that a statement of this nature would be misunderstood. While it is possible to understand that he did not mean to suggest that Jesus could only be both God and man at the same time if His divinity were united to our corporate fallen humanity, I am of the view that such statements need to be avoided, for only those who are particular about the context of their theological works, would understand what the author intended to convey. Otherwise, statements like these give critics of the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature ammunition to shoot down the theory. It is important for one to be very clear in what one writes on a controversial subject such as the humanity of Jesus, in order to avoid being misunderstood. In fact, I have noted that most of Sequeira's critics do not take the context of his views seriously. This gives credence to my observation that he needs to be very clear in what he presents in his books.

Sequeira should have first written something like this: At the incarnation, Jesus' divinity was mysteriously united to our corporate humanity, so that Jesus was both God and man at the same time. Then, he should have proceeded to suggest that the humanity to which Jesus' divinity was united was the fallen humanity that needed to be redeemed. In this way he would have avoided being misunderstood as suggesting that Jesus could only have been both God and man by having His divinity united to our corporate fallen humanity. He did not become both God and man by uniting His divinity to our fallen humanity, He rather became both God and man by uniting His divinity to humanity. Nevertheless, the humanity that was united to His divinity was our corporate humanity that needed redemption, for it was that fallen humanity that needed redemption.

While making this important observation, I need to point out again that Sequeira always treats Christology in the context of hamartiology and soteriology. As such, he makes statements that can easily be misunderstood. This seems to be the case as to whether he is discussing Jesus' Person or His work. It is for this reason that some of his critics have said that he goes to extremes in his theological views. (In October 2016, a friend of mine told me that his professor told his class that Sequeira is a theologian who goes to extremes in every area of theology.) While this may be an unfair judgement of Sequeira, it is clear that he gives his critics opportunities to attack his theology, because of his failure to clarify some of his views. It should also be observed that, since Sequeira mainly writes for the general public, he is not as careful as he would probably be if he were to write for academics. However, my view is that it is those who are not theologically sophisticated who desperately need a well-refined theology, because they do not have the skills that a trained theologian has to work out their own set of beliefs based on their own study of God's word.

Sequeira suggests that Jesus' humanity was dominated by the law of sin, and was born of the Holy Spirit. This needs some clarification.

### **11.3.2 Jesus' Humanity Dominated by the Law of Sin, and the Idea of being Born of the Holy Spirit**

According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:146), 'His humanity was identical in every point to ours (see Hebrews 2:17), so that the body He received through Mary was a body of sin (see Galatians 4:4; Romans 1:3) dominated by the law of sin (see Romans 8:2, 3)'. In order to avoid being misunderstood, he suggests: 'However, Christ was also born of the Holy Spirit from His very conception (see Luke 1:35). So, from the very beginning of His life on earth, Christ's mind, or soul was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in the human spirit' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147).

When the phrase 'dominated by the law of sin' is applied to a human being other than Jesus, it means that the person has the tendency to sin, and even sins as the Bible puts it, for there is none who does not sin. Many scholars have found it very difficult to apply this phrase to Jesus, for in their view, it makes Jesus a sinner in need of redemption just like all other human beings. It is for this reason that Sequeira is quick to add that somehow Jesus was different from the rest of humanity in that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was under the full control of the Holy Spirit right from the beginning of His life on earth. I did point out that Sequeira suggests that Jesus was unique, despite the fact that He assumed the very fallen human nature that He found. However, perhaps there is a need to further clarify the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation and in Jesus' life.

Since, as the Bible puts it, Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, is it possible that the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of the law of sin from Mary to Jesus? The angel Gabriel related to Mary: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Commenting on this text, Grudem (2015:531) argues:

Luke 1:35 connects this conception by the Holy Spirit with the holiness or moral purity of Christ, and reflection on that fact allows us to understand that through the absence of a human father, Jesus was not fully descended from Adam, and that this break in the line

of descent was the method God used to bring it about that Jesus was fully human yet did not share inherited sin from Adam.

Grudem (2015:531-532) adds that 'the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary must have prevented not only transmission of sin from Joseph (for Jesus had no human father) but also, in a miraculous way, the transmission of sin from Mary'. He is in harmony with Erickson (2013:689) who conveys: 'It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or guilt from Mary to Jesus. Without that special sanctifying influence, he would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have'.

While scholars such as Grudem and Erickson suggest that the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of the tendency to sin from Mary to Jesus, Sequeira asserts that Jesus inherited the law of sin from Mary. Sequeira makes it clear that Jesus did not inherit guilt, because it is not transferrable. No human being has inherited guilt from their parents. In Sequeira's view, Jesus was not the 'Holy One' because the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin from Mary to Him, but because He was also the Son of God. The work of the Holy Spirit during the incarnation was not to prevent transmission of the law of sin from Mary to Jesus, but to bring about the incarnation itself. The role of the Holy Spirit was to unite in Mary's womb, Jesus' divinity and His humanity inherited from His mother. Thus, the human nature of Jesus was not inherently without the tendency to sin. At the point of His birth, Jesus was not holy because He had no law of sin in His human nature, but because He was the God-Man – He was both divine and human. He was a union of a holy divine nature and a fallen human nature, and His holy divine nature made the God-Man holy. This seems to be what Sequeira teaches.

There is another way in which Jesus was holy: He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. In light of this, the following statement of Sequeira needs to be analysed: '*However, Christ was also born of the Spirit from His very conception* (see Luke 1:35). So, from the very beginning of His life on earth, Christ's mind, or soul, was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in the human spirit' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147; emphasis added). I must



admit that I have faced a challenge as I have been trying to figure out what Sequeira is trying to convey. It is true that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, meaning that Mary's pregnancy was not after the natural way that all women become pregnant. In a mysterious way, the Holy Spirit prepared a human body in Mary's womb to which He joined Jesus' divinity. However, how am I to interpret '*born of the Spirit from His conception*'? Is Sequeira suggesting that the fallen human nature that Jesus assumed had to be born of the Holy Spirit right from conception? It would appear that this is how he expects his readers to interpret this statement. This assertion is made because of that part of his abovementioned statement, arguing, 'So from the very beginning of His life on earth, Christ's mind, or soul, was under the full control of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in the human spirit' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147).

If this interpretation is as Sequeira would want it, is it correct then to argue that he actually teaches that Jesus was 'born again' right from His conception? Is he suggesting that Jesus Himself received the new-birth experience that fallen human beings receive when they accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord, right at His conception? I ask these questions because to be 'born of the Holy Spirit' (John 3:5) is synonymous with being 'born again' (John 3:3). Jesus Himself told Nicodemus to be 'born again', or to be 'born of water and the Spirit' (John 3:3, 5), as He stated: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). Every human being who has been born of a woman needs to be born of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). John stated: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). This probably simply means that Jesus became a human being, not necessarily that He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature as Sequeira suggests. However, the only human nature that existed at the incarnation was a fallen, sinful human nature. Therefore, if Jesus got His humanity from Mary, then His human nature was the very fallen, sinful human nature that Mary possessed.

I need to point out, however, that Jesus' case, in terms of being born of the Holy Spirit, as Sequeira puts it, is different, because He was born of the Holy Spirit from His con-

ception. While Sequeira does not clearly express himself on this matter, he seems to mean just that. It is, however, misleading to say that Jesus was 'born-again' (Sequeira does not use the phrase 'born again' when referring to Jesus) from His conception, because the people to whom this applies do not only have the tendency to sin in their nature, but they have also actually committed sin. After they are born again, they still remember the sins they committed before they received regeneration. Therefore, Sequeira probably talks about Jesus being born of the Holy Spirit, not in the sense in which Jesus meant Nicodemus had to be born. Of course, being 'born again' (John 3:3), or being 'born of the Spirit' (John 3:5) does not apply to our state of actual sinning, but to our nature of sin (the tendency to sin). This is supported by the statement in John 3:6: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. Jesus is here referring to the need for a change of the nature we are all born with. This, according to Sequeira, is the same nature that Jesus assumed through the incarnation. This nature is spiritually dead. However, as I will show later, Jesus, according to Sequeira, was not born spiritually dead because, right from His conception (which was by the power of the Holy Spirit), the spiritually dead human nature that He assumed, was made spiritually alive in the mysterious union of the divine and human natures in Him. It was the union of the divine and the human in Jesus that brought resurrection to the spiritually dead human nature.

Scholars such as Gulley and Erickson cannot see any truth in Sequeira's implied teaching about Jesus having been 'born again' or 'born of the Holy Spirit' right from His conception. Gulley (2012:435), for instance, postulates: 'Jesus alone did not need the new birth – which says that something about His birth puts Him in a class by Himself'. Indeed, we do not find any Scripture that talks about Jesus having had to receive the new-birth experience. Gulley expresses it well by saying that something about Jesus' birth puts Him in a class by Himself. However, is this not because of the fact that He was already born of the Holy Spirit right at His conception, just as Sequeira puts it? Gulley's point is indeed made to support his view that Jesus did not assume the fallen spiritual nature that all human beings are born with. Thus, he may not be in support of the view that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit right from His conception in the sense that Sequeira suggests.

However, He also mentions that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit. For instance, he asserts: 'The Father gave (John 3:16), the Son was willing to come (Heb. 10:7), and was *born of the Holy Spirit*' (Gulley 2012:425; emphasis added). He then adds: 'He was *born of the Holy Spirit* through a virgin' (Gulley 2012:426; emphasis added).

For Gulley, therefore, being 'born of the Holy Spirit' may be synonymous with being 'conceived of the Holy Spirit', for he states: 'Christ was eternally divine as God, and was miraculously born into this world through the Holy Spirit, receiving humanity through the Spirit's work in Mary' (Gulley 2012:427). He adds: 'Credit for Christ's birth rests fully in God's Spirit – Mary was only a willing means. Just as our salvation rests fully in Christ, so Christ's birth as a human, rests fully in the Holy Spirit' (Gulley 2012:427-428). Gulley's point seems to be simply that Jesus' existence as a human being was through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb and not that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit in the sense in which Sequeira suggests. I will discuss this point further when evaluating Gulley's Christology.

I still need to ask: Is it biblically correct to say that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit right from conception? This is a very difficult question to answer. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that this was what actually happened to Jesus. I make this assumption, because we have one example of a human being who was filled with the Holy Spirit right from conception: John the Baptist, of whom, Scripture relates: 'He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb' (Luke 1:15b). However, fallen human beings are filled with the Holy Spirit upon receiving Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. About this, Peter was clear: 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). Peter was here addressing people who were not only sinners by nature, but who had also personally committed sin, which included crucifying Jesus. On the other hand, while still being in his mother's womb, John had not personally committed sin, but he had inherited the tendency to sin from his parents and so he needed the new-birth experience. Therefore, it could be correct to argue that God determined that John was already to be 'born again' in his mother's womb. We may not know at what stage of his development

the Holy Spirit filled him. It suffices simply to know that John the Baptist was already filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb. It seems in order to state that John the Baptist was already born of the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb, because only those who are born of the Holy Spirit are filled with the Holy Spirit.

It should be asked: Was it necessary for John the Baptist to be filled with the Holy Spirit right from his mother's womb? Why did God only do this for John the Baptist and not for the rest of the human beings? I ask this question for the sake of scholars such as Adams (1994:26) who writes:

The elementary question that must follow from this is Why, then, didn't God give to each of us the same measure of the Holy Spirit – 'from the womb' – as He gave to Christ? And wouldn't it have been nice for each of us to start out with a fully surrendered will, as Crews claimed Christ did?

I must respond to Adams' question by stating that God demonstrated through John's life that He can fill fallen human beings with the Holy Spirit from the womb. Why He has not done the same for the rest of human beings, is a question that I cannot answer, for one cannot speak for God where He has Himself chosen to not say anything. The fact is that He did it for John the Baptist. I can only guess that the reason for that was because of the nature of John the Baptist's mission as the forerunner of the Messiah (cf. Is 40:3-5; Matt 3:3; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 3:1-6; John 1:19-23). God decided to prepare His servant for that mission from his mother's womb.

When I was studying child psychology in preparation to become a teacher, I learnt that human beings begin to receive communications from the external environment while they are still in their mother's womb. I also recall that, when my wife was pregnant with our firstborn child, at about five months, when I tenderly touched her belly, the baby in her womb would kick his legs. It was an exciting experience. Psychologists do tell us that the communications we make to our unborn children do affect them after they are born. Interestingly, the Bible seems to support the idea that babies do get affected by external

communication. For instance, it is said of John the Baptist: 'For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped for joy' (Luke 1:44). The Holy Spirit must have communicated the good news of salvation to John the Baptist that would come through Jesus Christ conceived in Mary's womb. It is not overboard to argue, therefore, that God has already filled John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb so that he would always be under the Holy Spirit's control. That did, however, not make John's human nature inherently different from that of the rest of the human beings. John the Baptist had a fallen human nature and needed redemption just like all other fallen, sinful human beings need it.

If John the Baptist could be born of the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb, why would Jesus not also be born of the Holy Spirit? In my opinion, if Jesus took the spiritual nature of Adam before the latter fell, we cannot talk of Him needing to be born of the Holy Spirit. However, if He assumed the fallen nature of Adam, then it is possible to think of Him as needing to be born of the Holy Spirit. He did not need to be born of the Holy Spirit in the sense in which the rest of the human beings (except John the Baptist) need to be born, for He never committed any sin. He, however, needed to be born of the Holy Spirit in the sense in which John the Baptist was born, that is, because of the fact that He assumed a fallen humanity, which has an inherent tendency to sin. This is probably the sense in which Sequeira would want us to understand His statement that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit right from conception.

It is important to state that, while both John the Baptist and Jesus were born of the Holy Spirit right from conception, there is a difference between the two. While John was conceived the natural way – by the act of Zacharias' sperm fertilising Elizabeth's ovum – Jesus was incarnated. Sequeira does not tell us how the Holy Spirit produced the human side of the God-Man. This is a mystery, which he acknowledges in all of his Christological works. And I am satisfied that he leaves the mystery where he found it: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you, therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). It seems

enough for Sequeira to just say that at the incarnation, the Holy Spirit mysteriously joined Jesus' divinity to our fallen humanity which needed redemption.

Another problematic area in Sequeira's Christology has to do with his statement that the fallen human nature that Jesus assumed was spiritually dead and had to be recalled to spiritual life. This is related to his view that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit from His conception.

### **11.3.3 Spiritually Dead Humanity Raised in Jesus Christ**

According to Sequeira (2009:46), 'God at the incarnation united the holy, immortal, divine nature of Christ to corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human nature. Thus humanity, though spiritually dead because of the Fall, was recalled to spiritual life in Christ (Ephesians 2:5; Titus 3:5)'. As it is clear from this statement, Sequeira has the conviction that the human nature that Jesus assumed was the very one that was spiritually dead, in other words, a nature that is devoid of the Holy Spirit. He assumed the same fallen nature that needed redemption. However, instead of beginning life with that spiritually dead human nature, Jesus began life with a spiritually alive human nature. In Sequeira's view, the union of the *holy, immortal, divine* nature of Christ with our *corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human* nature brought about the spiritual resurrection of the latter. This is one area in Sequeira's Christology which many theologians find difficult to understand. My survey of most Christologies has revealed that Sequeira is unique on this point. What he teaches is that *objectively*, the spiritual resurrection that we *subjectively* receive when we accept Jesus Christ, already took place at the incarnation. In other words, at the incarnation, the spiritually dead humanity was recalled to spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

It is important to note that Sequeira is able to have this conviction, because he takes the position that, at the incarnation, Jesus assumed our *corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human* nature, in other words, Jesus became the entire fallen humanity. As I pointed out earlier, in Sequeira's view, Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit right from His conception. The Holy Spirit first brought the 'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human' nature, which was spiritually dead, back to spiritual life in Jesus. This, He did by joining this

'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human' nature to Christ's 'holy, immortal, divine' nature. Christ's immortal, divine life brought about spiritual life to the 'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human' nature (Sequeira 2009:46).

The implication of this view is that Jesus began His human life spiritually alive. The rest of human beings (except John the Baptist) begin life *objectively* spiritually alive, but *subjectively* spiritually dead. Since Jesus *became* a 'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal' human being for the purpose of resurrecting the fallen humanity from a spiritual death, and that, through the incarnation, the 'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human' nature was spiritually recalled to life, it is clear that the entire humanity is *objectively* spiritually alive in Jesus Christ.

It requires the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to understand Sequeira's Christology. Certainly, his critics would say that he puts Jesus in the category of sinners, for if God at the incarnation united Christ's 'holy, immortal, divine' nature to our 'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human' nature, was Jesus not a sinner like the rest of humanity in need of redemption? Sequeira would definitely answer with a big NO! Jesus was not a sinner in need of redemption, because He simply *became* what He had not been before. It was simply for the purpose of our salvation that Jesus *assumed* our 'corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal' human nature. If there had been no union of the divine and the human in Jesus, then He would have been a sinner in need of redemption. Also, had He sinned in thought, word, or action, He would have been a sinner in need of redemption. Jesus, however, was and still is a unique Person.

Sequeira suggests that Jesus' obedience was worked out through a 'corrupt channel'. What is the implication of what he says about the 'corrupt channel'?

#### **11.3.4 Obedience Through a Corrupt Channel**

Since, according to Sequeira, Jesus assumed a fallen humanity, it follows that His obedience was worked out through a corrupt channel, for the fallen human nature that He

assumed, was corrupt. This is yet another problematic area of Sequeira's Christology, which requires my close attention.

Sequeira (1996:167) observes: *'It is true that, in itself, Christ's perfect obedience could not justify the fallen race, because of the "corrupt channel", or sinful human nature, that stood condemned.* Hence both the dying as well as the doing of Jesus was necessary in order to justify sinful man' (emphasis added). Does Sequeira suggest that Jesus' perfect obedience was tainted by the sinful nature He assumed? If Jesus' perfect obedience was tainted by the corrupt channel through which it was executed, why did God accept it in place of our disobedience? Would Sequeira not have been closer to the truth if he had acknowledged that the fallen nature that Jesus assumed was indeed corrupt, but then argue that, in Jesus' case, the corrupt channel through which He executed His perfect obedience, did not taint that perfect obedience? If Jesus' perfect obedience was tainted by the corrupt channel through which it was executed, was His obedience really perfect? I need to mention at this point that Sequeira does indeed state that the 'corrupt channel' through which Jesus executed His perfect obedience did not taint that perfect obedience. He asserts: 'But in no way was our Saviour's perfect performance marred by the sinful human nature He assumed' (Sequeira 1996:167). However, does he not contradict himself? How can he say that 'in itself, Christ's perfect obedience could not justify the fallen race, because of the "corrupt channel", or sinful human nature, that "stood condemned"', and at the same time say that 'in no way was our Saviour's perfect performance marred by the sinful nature He assumed'? (Sequeira 1996:167).

It is important to observe that the context of Sequeira's statements is the objection that some scholars make to the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus. He actually begins by stating: 'Some argue that if Jesus assumed our sinful nature as we know it, His perfect obedience would have been polluted because of the "corrupt channel" through which it was performed' (Sequeira 1996:167). With this, he is actually responding to this objection. Unfortunately, it would appear that, in his effort to defend his post-fall view, he ends up making contradictory statements. Otherwise, he probably simply wanted to say that in order for the fallen humanity to be justified, both Jesus' perfect obedience and His death



on the cross were required. Jesus needed to execute a perfect obedience in the fallen nature He assumed, for God's law requires a perfect obedience, which fallen human beings had failed to achieve. This perfect obedience was to be executed in the fallen human nature that Jesus assumed because as a substitute, He needed to take the fallen human nature. It is in this fallen human nature that God expects born-again fallen human beings to obey Him through maintaining their faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus' death was required, because the human beings for whom He became a substitute had broken God's law, which demanded the death of the transgressor. This is actually Sequeira's teaching in all of his Christological works. Therefore, I have taken the seeming contradictory statements as resulting from a scholar's passion to defend what he believes to be biblical truth, but which other scholars have also passionately attacked. Most probably, Sequeira did not intentionally contradict himself. At this point I will turn to his argument that Jesus' flesh lusted after sin.

### **11.3.5 Jesus' Flesh Lusted after Sin**

One area of Sequeira's Christology that I have struggled with ever since I first came across it, is where he suggests that Jesus' flesh lusted after sin. He makes this statement that, to some theologians, sounds heretical:

*Christ's flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, lusted after sin. But His mind, being spiritual, never yielded to sin, and thus He conquered sin in the flesh through the power of the Spirit (see Luke 4:13, 14). Likewise, if we have the mind of Christ, if we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will make no 'provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof (Romans 13:14)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147; emphasis added).*

Before I explain my own struggles with Sequeira's statement, it is worthwhile to mention that it is the scholars who teach the pre-fall view of Jesus' humanity who really find it difficult to accept it. Weber (1994:69-70), for instance, argues that, since Jesus assumed the spiritual nature of the unfallen Adam, His flesh, which was sinless, did not lust after sin. He asserts: 'In becoming human Jesus remained "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate

from sinners” (Heb. 7:26)’ (Weber 1994:69). In his view, ‘Adam sinned in sinless flesh, and that’s where Jesus overcame, proving once and for all time that God’s Law could be kept’ (Weber 1994:70). Weber makes these statements as he evaluates Sequeira’s statement, ‘Christ’s flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, lusted after sin’.

Nevertheless, Sequeira (1996:170) suggests that ‘Christ was unlike, or separate from, the sinful human race He came to redeem in His sinless living – not in the nature which He took’. In his opinion, in Hebrews 7:26, the author of the letter to the Hebrews was not referring to Jesus’ sinless human nature, but to His sinless living. Jesus ‘was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin’ (Heb 4:15). As already noted, Jesus’ temptations give born-again Christians hope, because of the fact that He was tempted in the fallen human flesh that He assumed. Proving that the law of God could be kept in sinless flesh is not a mystery, for it would not have been a mystery for Adam if he had kept it. In sinning, Adam did an unnatural thing, but it was a mystery for Jesus to prove that God’s law could be kept in the fallen flesh He assumed. If He kept God’s law in His *sinless* human flesh, how does He expect us to keep it in our *sinful* human flesh? In His sinless human flesh, Jesus is an example to the unfallen Adam and not to those of us who inherited a fallen human nature.

My struggle with Sequeira’s statement is in the area of *lust*. What did he mean when he said that ‘*Christ’s flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, lusted after sin*’? Is *lust* not in itself sin? If Sequeira can convincingly prove that *lust* is not sin, then my struggle will evaporate. I do know that temptation in itself is not sin, for it is only when the mind *consents* to the temptation that it becomes sin (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147), but can we say the same about *lust*?

This is how human beings in their fallen human nature are tempted: ‘But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death’ (James 1:14, 15). The KJV relates: ‘But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, when it is finished,

bringeth forth death'. The term being translated as 'desire' or 'lust' is the Greek noun ἐπιθυμία. Commenting on the term 'lust' in James 1:14, the *SDA Bible Commentary* states: 'Lust. Gr. ἐπιθυμία, "desire", "craving" for that which is evil' (Nichol 1980b:510). The comment on lust in James 1:15 says: 'Lust. Literally, "the lust", here, evil lust (cf. v.14) which finds sin appealing. "Lust", or "desire", of themselves need not be identical with "sin"' (Nichol 1980b:510). It would appear that, when we seek to satisfy our basic wants in ways contrary to God's plan, we flirt with sin and allow ourselves to be enticed into sinful acts (Nichol 1980b:510).

According to Bullinger (1975:472), ἐπιθυμία is 'what is directed towards anything, desire which attaches itself to or upon its object. It is used exclusively of sinful desire, which corresponds to man's depraved nature. The inward passion of concupiscence'. It can be argued, therefore, that if Jesus assumed a fallen human nature as Sequeira suggests, then it was possible for the fallen human flesh that He assumed, to lust after sin. And since 'lust' (or 'desire') is not necessarily sin, Sequeira is in no way suggesting that Jesus committed sin when he says that 'Christ's flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, lusted after sin'. He simply conveys that there was a natural tendency to sin in the fallen human flesh that Jesus assumed, which the devil used to tempt Him. There were desires in the fallen human flesh that Jesus assumed that, if not controlled, would have turned into sin when Jesus was tempted. However, by using His mind, Jesus controlled those desires or lusts by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in Him.

Knowing then that 'lust' or 'desire' is not necessarily sin, Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147) is able to argue:

Christ's temptations came to Him the same way ours come to us – through the sinful (selfish) desires of the flesh. It was through bodily wants that Satan tempted Him in the wilderness to use His divine power to satisfy self, independently of His Father's will (see Luke 4:2-4). It was His natural fear of death (self-love of the flesh) that led Jesus three times to plead with His Father to remove the bitter cup of the cross (see Mark 14:34-41).

I should note that Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147) is very quick to also state: ‘But the self-centred desires of the flesh cannot be satisfied without the consent of the mind. Temptation, in and of itself, does not become sin until the mind *consents* to the temptation’. Throughout His life here on earth, Jesus’ mind never consented to temptation. Fully controlled by the Holy Spirit, Jesus always said NO to temptation.

There is one more thing that has troubled me concerning the statement that Sequeira makes with respect to Jesus and lust. I have always read his statement with Matthew 5:28 in mind: ‘But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to *lust* for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ (emphasis added). *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament* (ESV) puts it this way: ‘But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent [ἐπιθυμῆσαι] has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ (Schwandt 2019). Whenever I have read Sequeira’s statement, I wondered: If looking at a woman lustfully is sin, is Sequeira not suggesting that Christ sinned by saying that His *flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, lusted after sin?*

The answer to this predicament lies in the fact that Sequeira’s statement is concerned with the cravings of the sinful flesh, whereas Matthew 5:28 is addressing lustful intent – the two are not the same. When a temptation comes to a person, there is a tendency inside that person’s fallen flesh to do as the temptation suggests. However, if the person is under the control of the Holy Spirit and makes a decision to not fulfil the craving of the flesh, the person will not sin. It is in this light that Sequeira ([1993] 1999:147) argues: ‘But His [Jesus’] mind, being spiritual, never yielded to sin, and thus He conquered sin in the flesh through the power of the Spirit (see Luke 4:13, 14)’. By depriving the flesh of its cravings, Jesus suffered in the flesh (cf. 1 Pet 4:1). On this point, Sequeira relates to his readers: ‘Please note that the suffering Peter is talking about here has to do with Christ’s victory over sin; it is *not* limited to His suffering on the cross. Being tempted in the flesh, Christ suffered in the flesh (see Hebrews 2:10), but His victory was in the mind’ (Sequeira [1993] 1999:147-148).

Matthew 5:28 is not addressing temptation *per se*, it is addressing a deliberate choice to look lustfully at a woman. Barclay (2009a:169) correctly states:

According to the literal meaning of the Greek, the man who is condemned is the man who looks at a woman with the deliberate intention of lusting after her. The man who is condemned is the man who deliberately uses his eyes to awaken his lust, the man who looks in such a way that passion is awakened and desire deliberately stimulated.

This brings us to the next question: Is it possible to differentiate the mind from the flesh? This is another area of Sequeira's Christology that has proven problematic, as he makes some statements that need clarification.

#### **11.3.6 Jesus' Mind was not Joined to Sinful Flesh**

Whenever I reach the point in Sequeira's book, *Saviour of the World* (Sequeira 1996), where he suggests that Jesus' mind was not joined to our sinful flesh, I wonder: Is it possible to separate the mind from the sinful flesh? Responding to those who object to the post-fall view of the humanity of Jesus, based on the fact that all human beings are born sinners in need of salvation, Sequeira (1996:164; emphasis added) argues:

So, while Christ did really and truly assume our sinful nature which is under the curse of the law and therefore condemned to death, this did not make Christ Himself to be a sinner or a blemished sacrifice. That human nature which He assumed was not His by native right; He took it in order to redeem fallen mankind. Had Christ, even by a thought, yielded to the sinful desires of the flesh, He would have become a guilty sinner like us. *But as long as He did not unite his will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner.*

It would have been enough for me if Sequeira had ended with the statement, 'The human nature which He assumed was not His by native right; He took it in order to redeem fallen

mankind', but then he adds: 'But as long as He did not unite his will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner'. What does Sequeira mean with this? Does he suggest that a fallen human being can be divided into flesh and mind? Does he mean that, while the flesh that Jesus assumed was the very fallen flesh all human beings have, His mind was not fallen?

The Bible views a human being as consisting of *spirit*, *soul*, and *body* (cf. 1 Thess 5:23). Sequeira ([1993] 1999:144) argues that we are spiritual, physical, and social beings, because we are made up of spirit, body, and soul. In his view, the spirit 'is the component in us that above all else distinguishes us from the animals and makes us spiritual beings accountable to God' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:144). God speaks to us through the spirit. And the Holy Spirit dwells in the spirit of a born-again Christian. The soul, as defined by Sequeira, 'is the component that makes us human, and includes the ability to think and learn and choose, our ideals, love, hate, feelings, discernment, etc' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:145). It is in the soul that we find the seat and essence of our personality. In the soul are to be found the faculties of the mind (cf. Job 7:15), the will (cf. Prov 2:10, 19), knowledge (cf. 2 Sam 5:8; Job 10:1; John 12:27), and the emotions (Sequeira [1993] 1999:145). The body is the physical structure that makes us tangible beings.

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, these three components of a human being need to be sanctified. Paul wrote: 'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole *spirit, soul, and body* be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess 5:23; emphasis added). Sin affected these three components of a human being, as Sequeira ([1993] 1999:144) asserts: 'When Adam and Eve sinned, the Holy Spirit left them, leaving their spirits vacant for Satan to occupy. Selfishness replaced unselfish love, and their lives were darkened spiritually (see 2 Peter 2:19)'. About the soul of a fallen human being, Sequeira asserts: 'The soul, with its life of self, is our natural self. The Bible also calls this "the flesh" (see Galatians 3:3; Romans 8:4)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:146). With respect to the body, Sequeira observes: 'The natural desires of the body, now polluted with self, became lust; their purpose became self-satisfaction rather than pleasing God' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:149). However, God's plan

was that the body should be the servant of the soul, which in turn was to be under the direction of God's Holy Spirit, dwelling in the human spirit.

According to Sequeira, in order to save humankind, Jesus had to assume humanity in its totality. He had to assume a fallen humanity's spirit, soul, and body, for what has not been assumed has not been healed (saved). He agrees with this statement made by Athanasius, already referred to. This takes me back to the question: What did Sequeira mean when he said, 'But as long as He did not unite his will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner'? (Sequeira [1993] 1999:164). If he means that Jesus did not assume the mind of the fallen humanity, then the fallen humanity's mind was not saved. If this were to be the case, then Sequeira would be contradicting himself. This is because a human being is a 'whole'. This is why the Bible states: 'And the Word became flesh' (John 1:14). This simply means that the second Person of the Godhead became a human being with everything intact: Body, soul, and spirit (cf. 1 Thess 5:23).

If we want to understand Sequeira's statement, it is important to take both the immediate and general contexts of his Christology into consideration. The immediate context suggests that Sequeira is dealing with the aspect of Jesus not being a sinner in need of salvation, even though He assumed a fallen humanity, because He did not yield to the sinful desires of the flesh. Just before making the statement which is the subject of this discussion, Sequeira (1996:164) opines: 'Had Christ, even by a thought, yielded to the sinful desires of the flesh, He would have become a guilty sinner like us'. It is after this statement that he argues: 'But as long as He did not unite his will or mind to our sinful nature which He assumed, He cannot be considered a sinner'. In my view, this statement should be interpreted to mean that Jesus did not consent to the desires of the sinful nature which He assumed. This was because, right from His conception and birth, He was filled with the Holy Spirit under whose control He lived His life on earth. My interpretation of the statement is supported by Sequeira's other statements. He argues, for instance: 'At the incarnation, the Holy Spirit mysteriously united Jesus' divinity to our corporate humanity in the womb of Mary. This humanity, which Jesus assumed through Mary, was in and of

itself spiritually dead like that of all mankind' (Sequeira 1996:198). If the humanity that Jesus assumed was the very humanity which was spiritually dead, then it is correct to say that even the mind that He assumed was that of a fallen humanity.

Earlier Sequeira ([1993] 1999:44) wrote:

Scripture teaches that Christ actually did *assume* our condemned sinful human nature as we know it. But He totally defeated 'the law of sin and death' (Romans 8:2) that resided in that sinful human nature and then executed it on the cross. Had Christ consented, even by a thought, to the sinful desires of that nature which He assumed, then He would have become a sinner in need of a saviour Himself (emphasis added).

Sequeira's emphasis seems to be on the aspect of Jesus not consenting to the sinful desires of the nature that He assumed. It was through the mind that Jesus made a decision not to consent to the sinful desires of the fallen human nature that He assumed. It is probably correct to argue that, in Sequeira's view, while Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, He was not carnal, for right from the beginning of His earthly life He was filled with the Holy Spirit. When Satan tempted Him to sin through the desires of the sinful flesh that He assumed, His mind did not consent. To be carnally minded is to be sold out to sin, devoid of the Holy Spirit, and living a life of sin (Rom 7:14). This is what Paul also said to the Christians in the city of Corinth (1 Cor 3:1-4), because their way of life did not reflect that of people who had been born of the Holy Spirit and were spiritually minded. On the other hand, Jesus always lived His life in line with the dictates of the Holy Spirit to whose control He willingly yielded (Heb 4:15). Paul argued that 'those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit' (Rom 8:5). Jesus lived according to the Spirit and always minded the things of the Spirit: 'For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be' (Rom 8:6, 7). As already noted, Jesus' mind was not a carnal mind, for He was filled with the Holy Spirit right from the



beginning of His earthly life. Therefore, Sequeira seems to suggest that Jesus' mind did not consent to Satan's temptation. His point is simply that, while we have sinned by consenting in our minds to the sinful desires of the flesh, Jesus did not consent. His mind did not yield to the desires of the flesh, which Satan used to tempt Him. Apart from the fact that Jesus did not consent to temptation through His mind, and therefore, was not a sinner in need of salvation, the fallen, sinful nature He assumed was not His by native right. He was not a sinner in need of salvation, because He became what He was not by native right. He simply took the fallen, sinful human nature in order to redeem it.

To conclude, it can be stated that Sequeira teaches that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature with everything related to that nature, but that in Jesus' case, *sinning* did not become part of His life. He assumed a spiritual nature that was dead, but which was recalled to life by God at the incarnation through the act of the Holy Spirit. Jesus began His life here on earth under the full control of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in His human spirit. His mind did not consent to the sinful desires of the flesh. He therefore could not be said to have been a sinner Himself in need of salvation. Sequeira (1996:200; emphasis added) opines:

The *mind* of Jesus was fully surrendered to God's will so that no propensity, or even inclination, to sin rested there. But His *flesh* was dominated by the principle that affects all mankind – the principle of self. Consequently, to Him, holy living was not simply a matter of following the natural inclination of His human nature, as was the case of sinless Adam. Holy living for Jesus in His humanity involved a constant battle against 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' (1 John 2:16).

Before I end this evaluation of Sequeira's post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, I will consider the undergirding philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced Sequeira's post-fall view of Jesus' human nature.

## **11.4 Undergirding Philosophical Categories and Thought Patterns**

To appreciate the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature as understood and taught by Sequeira, it is important to examine the undergirding philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced the formulation of the model. I will do this by examining his major Christological work, *Saviour of the World* (Sequeira 1996), and his major soteriological work, *Beyond Belief* (Sequeira [1993] 1999). The post-fall view of Jesus' humanity dates back to as early as the time of Athanasius, and even before that. However, since this study focuses on the view in the form in which Sequeira teaches it, I will not go back to the time of Athanasius. The post-fall view of Jesus' humanity as it is taught by Sequeira was influenced by his understanding of the nature of sin and God's solution to the problem of sin. I will therefore look at the nature of sin in relation to Jesus' humanity. I will then look at the aspect of Jesus' qualification to be the substitute for a fallen humankind. Related to both the nature of sin and substitution, are temptations and the aspect of being an example, which are both part of the philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced Sequeira's post-fall view of Jesus' human nature. I will also look at these aspects. Finally, I will look at Jesus' qualification to the office of High Priest, which also forms part of Sequeira's philosophical thought patterns in formulating his post-fall view of Jesus' human nature.

### **11.4.1 The Nature of Sin**

According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:11), the gospel is God's solution to the sin problem. In his view, sin necessitated the incarnation. He suggests that we can only appreciate God's solution to the problem of sin by first recognising the full extent of the problem of sin: 'Only when we truly understand our complete sinfulness in both nature and action will we truly understand God's solution. Not until we understand the depraved nature of sin will we lose all confidence in self and turn to Christ as our only righteousness' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:11).

The issue of Jesus' human nature is so closely intertwined with implications for our salvation that it is imperative that we study one in light of the other (Sequeira 1996:9).

Studying Jesus' human nature in light of salvation is the only way we will ever come to a correct biblical consensus on the human nature of Jesus (cf. Sequeira 1996:9).

In chapter 7, I noted that Sequeira believes that sin is both part of human nature and human action. Human beings are born with a natural tendency to sin, also called the law of sin in the flesh (cf. Rom 7:23). Because of this natural tendency to sin that human beings are born with, a saviour is needed even before human beings commit sin. Sin is *iniquity*, which refers to 'crooked' or 'bent'. This is our natural spiritual condition. *Sin* as missing the mark is a result of our natural condition of being spiritually bent. According to Sequeira ([1993] 1999:15), our sinful condition or iniquity makes it impossible for us to do anything but miss the divine mark, unless we have a Saviour. *Transgression* refers to a deliberate violation of law, a wilful act of disobedience (Sequeira [1993] 1999:15). Transgression presupposes a knowledge of the law.

According to Sequeira, the human nature that Jesus was to assume, needed to be such that it would deal with the dual problem of sin. He therefore finds in the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature just the right model to take care of the dual problem of sin. To deal with sin as a tendency or law that resides in our fallen flesh, Jesus had to assume our fallen nature. Since sin brought our spiritual death, in uniting Jesus' divinity to our fallen humanity, God called us back to spiritual life. As a corporate human being, Jesus, in His life here on earth, perfectly obeyed God's law. In His obedience, the entire fallen humanity obeyed, since Jesus assumed a corporate fallen humanity. The sins that we are committing, were laid on Jesus, and in His death on the cross, these sins were paid for in full. On the cross, the fallen nature that Jesus assumed, also died eternally in Him. It was in this way that God dealt with the dual problem of sin. On the cross, the fallen human nature was purged of sin as nature. Then, through the resurrection, the fallen nature that Jesus assumed, was glorified. He came out of the grave with a human nature that no longer had a tendency to sin. This is a nature that all the saved people will bear when Jesus comes the second time (cf. 1 John 3:2). However, what qualified Jesus to be our substitute?

#### **11.4.2 Jesus as our Substitute**

To become fallen humanity's substitute, Jesus needed to be qualified. In Sequeira's opinion, only one who was both God and a human being would qualify to become humankind's Saviour. God created humankind. The law that humankind broke, belongs to God. Therefore, in agreement with God's own plan to save humankind in case human-kind fell into sin, the second Person of the Godhead decided to fulfil what the eternal council of the Holy Trinity had planned even before human beings were created (cf. Rev 13:8). Therefore, the second Person of the Godhead became a human being. Thus, in Jesus we have the God-Man, the only being to exist with two natures – a divine and a human nature.

It should be noted, however, that the human being who needs a substitute, is a fallen human being. Therefore, Jesus had to assume a fallen human nature in order to qualify to become the fallen humanity's substitute. In this light, Sequeira ([1993] 1999:45) asserts: 'In order for Christ to qualify legally to be our substitute and representative, His divinity had to be united to our corporate fallen humanity that needed redeeming'. It was not enough for the second Person of the Godhead to become a human being. He needed to assume the very fallen human nature that He found. Had Jesus assumed the nature of the unfallen humanity, He would have become a substitute for that unfallen humanity. This would have been illegal and it would have questioned the very nature of God. God has to be consistent in everything He does. Jesus had to experience temptation in the fallen human nature that He assumed. In fact, the unfallen humanity did not need a substitute. Therefore, since it was a fallen, sinful humanity that needed a substitute, and Jesus fulfilled that role, it can be argued that He assumed the fallen, sinful humanity. This seems to be Sequeira's line of reasoning. To me, this is sound philosophical reasoning.

#### **11.4.3 The Nature of Temptation**

Fallen human beings face temptation in their fallen state. Scripture says: 'But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death' (James 1:14, 15) and 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our

weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. 4:15). In Sequeira's view, if Jesus really became the fallen humanity's substitute, then He was tempted in the nature of fallen humanity, which He assumed at the incarnation. To put it another way: To be tempted in all points as we are, Jesus must have assumed the nature of a fallen humanity. In this light, Sequeira (1996:179) argues: 'The real issue in Christ's earthly life was not that He could be tempted or that He was subject to the possibility of falling as did Adam. The issue was: Could Jesus, in sinful human nature, resist Satan and defeat temptation – the principle of self-seeking?'

To Sequeira, it does not make sense to have Jesus assume the nature of an unfallen humanity and yet tell the fallen human beings that He 'was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'. As already noted, if Jesus assumed the unfallen human nature, then the fallen human beings do not have comfort in His victory over temptation. Born-again fallen human beings, while having access to the power of strength that Jesus had, have a heavier battle to face with temptation than Jesus had, if indeed Jesus assumed the nature of an unfallen humanity. If this is true, then the pre-fall view contradicts Scripture, which portrays Jesus as having struggled with temptation more than fallen human beings will ever struggle with it (cf. Heb 12:4).

While acknowledging that Jesus' temptations were bigger than the temptations that born-again Christians face, because He faced them with a full conscious of His inherent divine power to which Satan tempted Him to appeal, Sequeira observes that Jesus' temptations were only bigger than ours, because Satan tempted Jesus in the fallen human nature that He assumed, to appeal to His inherent divine power independently of His Father. If Jesus had assumed an unfallen human nature, He would have been tempted to do something unnatural to His human nature just like Adam in his unfallen human nature was tempted to do something unnatural (Sequeira 1996:181). In a human nature which was unfallen, Jesus would not really have struggled with temptations to the extent that Scripture suggests He did, even if He was conscious of His divine power to which He would readily have appealed had He chosen to do so.

According to Sequeira (1996:180), if Jesus' temptation in His sinless human nature was bigger than ours because of the inherent divine power available to Him, then we need to also admit that Adam's temptation in his unfallen human nature was bigger than ours, since his natural ability to do righteousness, inherent in his sinless nature, was bigger than ours. Similarly, if Adam experienced a bigger temptation than we would face, then it is more understandable that he gave in to temptation. If this is true, then Adam's sin is more excusable than ours. Nevertheless, in Sequeira's opinion, such reasoning flies in the face of the facts and also undermines God's perfect creation (Sequeira 1996:180).

Sequeira argues that it is the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature that really makes His victory over temptation a mystery. Had Adam overcome temptation in his unfallen state, it would not have been a mystery, for he would have accomplished what was natural to his unfallen human nature (Sequeira 1996:172). Therefore, Jesus' victory over temptation in the fallen human nature that He assumed is indeed a mystery. He was tempted to appeal to His inherent divine power in the fallen human nature that He assumed. Born-again fallen human beings are tempted not to depend on external help, but on their own power, which unfortunately, they do not even have. However, for Jesus, divine power was inherent. Finding that the fallen human nature He had assumed was becoming a problem, He would have easily appealed to His inherent divinity, instead of appealing to external help from the Father, but He did not do it. This made His victory over temptation a mystery.

Born-again fallen human beings are tempted to throw away the divine nature that they became part of (cf. 2 Pet 1:4) and get back to the corruption that they had left behind. Those who refuse to get back to a life of *sinning* are also tempted to stop depending on the Holy Spirit for victory over temptation or holy living. When they succumb to this temptation, they try to maintain their relationship with God by relying on their own strength to obey, which theologians call legalism. However, legalism is a worse state than they had been in before they accepted salvation.

The post-fall view posits that Jesus was tempted to use His inherent divine power independently of His Father, to overcome temptation, which came to Him in the fallen

human nature that He assumed. He was also tempted to lose His state of moral purity and sin by transgressing God's law. Nevertheless, He was a victor on both points of temptation. This seems to be Sequeira's Christological point of view with regard to temptation. I will now turn to the example motif.

#### **11.4.4 The Example Motif**

Born-again fallen human beings need an example to follow in their holy living. Since this is related to temptation, which I have already dealt with, I will not discuss it again. They also need an example in the suffering that they face as Christians (cf. 1 Pet 2:21). Since they suffer in their fallen human state, they need someone who is like them, except in *sinning*, to set an example to follow. Thus, Sequeira is of the view that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. It does not make sense to say that 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps' (Sequeira 1996:183), if He suffered in an unfallen human nature. Sequeira adds: 'If Christ assumed Adam's sinless spiritual nature, He becomes Adam's example, but not an example for fallen humanity' (Sequeira 1996:183).

Both Erickson (chapter 8) and Gulley (chapter 9), who teach the pre-fall view and the alternative Christology respectively, believe that the physical nature that Jesus assumed, was that of fallen humanity. Thus, it can be argued that in as far as physical suffering was concerned, Jesus is indeed an example for the born-again fallen humanity. Nevertheless, since all born-again Christians suffer physically in a nature that is fallen on both spiritual and physical level, Jesus' physical suffering in an unfallen spiritual nature and a fallen physical nature is not really an example to them.

It is important to note that, in Sequeira's view, Jesus' example motif, when taken out of context, turns to legalism. He observes: 'The Bible does point to Christ as our example, but it does so only with reference to those who have accepted Him by faith and who have experienced the new birth (see 1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 2:5-8)' (Sequeira [1993] 1999: 41). In his view, the Bible 'does not teach that the primary reason Christ became a man was to be our Example... Those who emphasize Christ as our Example without first clearly

presenting Him as our Saviour give the impression that they are teaching the example theory of atonement. This is why they are often accused of the heresy of perfectionism or legalism' (Sequeira [1993] 1999:41). Thus, while teaching the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, Sequeira condemns legalism, while scholars such as Gulley suggest that it follows naturally from the post-fall view. He thus contends that it is possible to espouse the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, without necessarily promoting legalism. In fact, Sequeira's own story is a testimony of his own struggle with legalism, which he suggests, only left his life after he understood the human nature of Jesus in light of the everlasting gospel. He narrates that he did his MA (Systematic Theology) and MDiv with the hope of experiencing peace that accompanies justification by faith (cf. Rom 5:1). These studies did not help at all. It was when He studied the Bible for Himself and saw how hamartiology informs Christology, and Christology informs soteriology, that he got liberated from legalism. He saw that sin could only be dealt with in totality by Jesus who assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. He believes that the only way born-again Christians can live victorious lives is by believing in Jesus who assumed a fallen, sinful human nature and dealt with the dual problem of sin in totality.

I will close Sequeira's undergirding philosophical thinking in his formulation of the post-fall view of Jesus' humanity by looking at Jesus' qualification to the office of High Priest.

#### **11.4.5 Jesus Christ as High Priest**

The book of Hebrews portrays Jesus as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. According to Sequeira (1996:29), the doctrine of Jesus' heavenly priestly ministry can be fully presented only when His humanity is fully identified with the humanity of those that He came to redeem. Jesus is introduced as our great High Priest (Heb 4:14-16) in the context of God's 'rest', a term that the author of the letter to the Hebrews has used to define righteousness by faith, and of which, he said, the Sabbath is a sign (Heb 4:1-11) (Sequeira 1996:29). Sequeira asserts that our faith in Jesus as our righteousness, as well as our assurance of salvation, must not be limited only to what He did during His earthly mission; it must also encompass Him as our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Sequeira 1996:29). However, Jesus'



earthly mission – His birth, life, death, and resurrection – obtained for all humanity a righteousness that fully qualifies us for heaven, now and in the judgment, a salvation that is full and complete (see Hebrews 5:18)...But in His heavenly ministry, as our great High Priest, Jesus intercedes and defends that righteousness for all those who by faith have received His righteousness, who have entered into God's rest and are standing under the umbrella of justification by faith alone (see Romans 4:25; 8:34; 1 John 2:1) (Sequeira 1996:29-30).

According to Sequeira, full confidence in salvation is based on these two facts: Jesus as our perfect Saviour and Jesus as our great High Priest (Sequeira 1996:30). As noted by Sequeira (1996:30), 'the word *priest* means one who represents the congregation before God'. In his opinion, the first thing we need to know about our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, is that He is able to represent us before the Father because He knows our human condition, having been tempted as we are (Heb 4:15), 'not as God, but in the humanity He assumed at the incarnation, a humanity which was identical to our humanity (see Hebrews 2:16-18)' (Sequeira 1996:30). Sequeira suggests that the main point that the author of the letter to the Hebrews was making, is that Jesus, as our great High Priest, can sympathise with our weakness, and therefore we must not be afraid to approach Him in His role as our representative before the Father (Sequeira 1996:30). The other way to put it is that there is no barrier between us sinners and our sinless High Priest, because He fully understands our struggles with the sinful flesh which He has assumed, but whose tendency to sin He controlled through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in His human spirit (Sequeira 1996:30). Jesus is therefore able to help us in our need, since 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', He 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3).

As born-again fallen human beings, we need mercy, because we have failed God so often. We also need strength, because without it we cannot live the Christian life. Jesus, as our great High Priest, is able to supply both these needs, for He is not only our perfect Saviour, but also our faithful, sympathetic, and merciful High Priest (Sequeira 1996:30).

After establishing the truth about the high priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb 4:14-16), the author of the letter to the Hebrews pointed out the four requirements that the Torah, the Book of the Law, stipulates for one who would be considered for the office of high priest (Heb 5:1-4). In Hebrews 5:5-10, the author showed how Jesus fully meets each of these qualifications, although he does not do so in the same order as they are presented in Hebrews (Sequeira 1996:30). The author also showed that, although Jesus meets the four requirements, there is a contrast between the Levitical priests who served in the earthly sanctuary, and Jesus who serves as our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, for Jesus' priestly ministry in heaven is vastly superior to the earthly priesthood (Sequeira 1996:30-31).

Below are the four qualifications for priesthood supplemented by the way in which the author of the letter to the Hebrews presented Jesus as fully meeting each of them:

1. *He must be chosen from 'among men' (Heb 5:1) to represent them before God.* In the OT, it was an established law that the High Priest could not be an outsider; he had to belong to and be one with those he represented. Hebrews 2:17 suggests that this was also true of Jesus as our great High Priest: 'Therefore, in all things He had to be made *like* His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people' (emphasis added). In this light, Sequeira (1996:31) argues: 'If in any way Christ did not identify Himself with our humanity, that is, with our sinful human nature as we know it, if in any way Christ did not have to battle with indwelling sin and be an over-comer, then He is immediately disqualified to be our great High Priest'. He suggests that, if we insist that Jesus was like us only in the physical sense of being prone to such aspects as fatigue, hunger, aging, and others, but that He was unlike us in His spiritual nature, we really are disqualifying Him to be our 'merciful and faithful High Priest' (Heb 2:17) who can 'sympathize with our weaknesses' (Heb 4:15) (Sequeira 1996:31). Thus, the only difference the author of the letter to the Hebrews makes between Jesus' human nature and our own is that, while we have sinned, Jesus never sinned. It is in this sense that He is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, [and] separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26)' (Sequeira 1996:31). It is correct to say,

therefore, that in His human nature, Jesus was one with us, but because of His total victory over our sinful flesh, He is not only our Saviour, but also our perfect representative or High Priest (Sequeira 1996:31).

2. *He must be able to 'have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness'* (Heb 5:2). Because the OT high priest shared the same human weaknesses of those he represented, he was neither indifferent to moral lapse, nor harsh with the people (Sequeira 1996:31). Sequeira suggests that by *weakness* the author of the letter to the Hebrews meant more than just physical weaknesses, as some insist (Sequeira 1996:31). This is because the term 'weakness' in Greek denotes both physical and moral frailty (Sequeira 1996:31). Hebrews 5:7 portrays the reality of Jesus' identification with the weakness of our struggling, sinful humanity, where the author related that Jesus 'in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death...was heard because of His godly fear'. Sequeira observes that, while this text is primarily a description of Gethsemane, something that none of us humans has experienced, the author of the letter to the Hebrews was also referring to Jesus' whole life on earth as shown by the phrase, 'in the days [plural] of His flesh' (Sequeira 1996:31).

In Hebrews 5:8, the author conveyed that 'though He was a son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered'. On this verse, Sequeira (1996:32) makes this insightful observation:

Since Christ never yielded to a single temptation, His human nature was deprived of the sinful desires it wanted to experience (see 1 Peter 4:1). His victory over the flesh meant that His flesh suffered as a result – something that He would not have experienced if His spiritual human nature had been like that of Adam before the Fall.

3. *He must be able to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people he represents* (Heb 5:3). Jesus' case is on this point different from that of the earthly high priests, who had to offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as for the sins of the people: 'Since Christ never sinned (see Hebrews 4:15), He had no sacrifices to offer for Himself, but He did bear our sins on the cross, because He bore us there (see 1 Peter 2:24)'

(Sequeira 1996:32). He, however, had to sacrifice Himself for us, which He offered once and for all (cf. Heb 10:4), ascended into the heavenly sanctuary, and sat down at the right hand of God to intercede for us as our great High Priest, which work He will continue to do until His enemies (and ours) are completely defeated.

4. *He must be appointed or 'called by God' (Heb 5:4), not self-appointed.* For one to become High Priest in the OT, one had to be divinely appointed – the position was not a self-appointed one. In this light, the author of the letter to the Hebrews quoted Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4 to prove that 'Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest' (Heb 5:5), but was called and appointed to this position by the Father.

According to Sequeira (1996:32), we not only have our perfect and complete Saviour in Jesus, but also our sympathetic and merciful High Priest. He asserts:

Because He fully identified Himself with our sinful humanity, apart from sinning, there is no area of our battle against the sin problem He does not understand from His own personal experience. He can, therefore, fully sympathize with our struggles against the flesh (Sequeira 1996:32).

There is no area of our sin problem that Jesus has not combated, overcome, and redeemed us from:

As Christians who have put our whole trust in Christ and His righteousness, we can come boldly to the throne of grace with full assurance, knowing full well that God is able to save us to the uttermost because in His gift, Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, Redeemer, and High Priest, we have everything necessary for our salvation (Sequeira 1996:33).

I will now make personal observations with respect to Sequeira's post-fall view. How does his post-fall view fair in light of the creed of Chalcedon, and Scripture?

## **11.5 Personal Observations on Jack Sequeira's Post-fall Model**

My personal observations on Jack Sequeira's post-fall model will focus on how the model stands when tested against the standard norm of the Bible.

### **11.5.1 Testing Sequeira's Model against Scripture**

Concerning Scripture, I must state that Sequeira is very consistent in his use of the biblical support for his post-fall view. He faithfully follows exegetical principles to arrive at his conclusions. What he asserts on the five Christological aspects supporting the post-fall view, namely the nature of sin, Jesus as fallen humanity's substitute, the nature of temptation, Jesus as fallen humanity's example, and Jesus as High Priest, coheres with Scriptural evidence.

I am particularly impressed with Sequeira's insistence that we have to discuss the human nature that Jesus assumed in light of the dual problem of sin. He maintains that the incarnation was necessitated by the sin problem. Had humanity not fallen into sin, creating the sin problem which needed to be resolved, the incarnation would have been unnecessary. Thus, Sequeira supports the biblical view that God created a perfect human being.

His stance to not venture into science to explain the incarnation, is commendable. This is because, in my view, where Scripture is silent, it is better to be silent as well, than to respond to the critics of the incarnation who are utilising science. The incarnation is a mystery, which human beings just have to accept by faith. No one really knows how the Holy Spirit prepared Jesus' human body in Mary's womb. Therefore, it is wrong to speculate, based on what is applicable to other human beings from the scientific point of view. This, nevertheless, is not a suggestion that we should not use science to help us to understand some aspects of salvation. True science does not contradict Scripture. The point that I want to make is that the incarnation defies all scientific explanations. We do not know how one person could be divine and human at the same time. We only know two existences – that of God and that of creatures. The incarnation gives us a type of existence that God thought of before human beings were created, but which only took

place when the second Person of the Godhead became a human being. In becoming a human being, Jesus did not cease to be God, but when people saw Him, they only saw a human being. This is nothing but a mystery.

I should point out, nevertheless, that Sequeira's failure to write a system to present his theological views in a more systematic manner, is a disservice to Systematic Theology. Because his views on the human nature of Jesus are scattered throughout most of his theological works, there are some areas in them that need clarification, which I have discussed in this chapter. Where views are scattered, it is very easy for one's readers to misinterpret one's statements. This is what one should expect of Sequeira's view of the human nature of Jesus.

My overall evaluation, however, is that Sequeira gives all Christologists and other theologians something to critically think about: Did Jesus assume a fallen human nature or not? I must ask Sequeira, however: If it is true that Jesus has assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, would it not be more acceptable to say that He assumed a *unique*, fallen, sinful human nature? In other words, would it not be more acceptable to say that He assumed a *unique* post-fall human nature? This is where I do not fully endorse Sequeira's Christology. While he does indicate in his works that Jesus was unique, it would have been more helpful to his readers if he had clearly stated that Jesus assumed a unique post-fall human nature, rather than simply maintain the traditional view that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature. The traditional post-fall Christology, while biblically supported, leaves an impression on the minds of people that Jesus was exactly like us, while in the real sense, Jesus was the God-Man – a unique human being.

## **11.6 Conclusion**

This evaluation has revealed that the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature as taught by Sequeira is premised on five philosophical thought patterns. The first is that if sin is a tendency or law, which all human beings are born with and what human beings do in violation of God's law then, to deal with this dual problem of sin, Jesus must have assumed a fallen human nature. God sent Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh in order

that He might condemn sin as a tendency or law in that sinful flesh, which is actually a fallen humanity's flesh (cf. Rom 8:3). In Sequeira's view, this was the only way that God could deal with sin as nature or as a law that dwells in our sinful flesh. Sin as behaviour or what we do in violation of God's law was laid on Jesus and when He died (in actuality and vicariously) on the cross, both *Sin* and *sins* were dealt with completely.

It is Sequeira's argument that in *assuming* His fallen human nature, Jesus did not Himself become a sinner, because He only *took* that fallen human nature upon Himself in order to redeem humanity. The clauses, *He became*, *He took*, *He was made*, and *He assumed*, differentiate Jesus from the rest of the fallen humanity. He *became* what He had never been by native right. Just as born-again fallen human beings do not inherently become divine by partaking of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet 1:4), Jesus did not become a sinner by partaking of a fallen human nature. As a matter of fact, He had two natures: The divine and the human, which were mysteriously joined. The holy, divine nature was united to the fallen (unholy), human nature, and instead of the unholy human nature defiling the holy, divine nature, the former was cleansed. In addition, Jesus did not commit any sin in thought, word, or action. He perfectly obeyed God's law. His mind, which was under the full control of the Holy Spirit right from His birth, did not give consent to the desires of the sinful human nature He assumed. Thus, Sequeira clearly presents Jesus as a unique human being, despite the fact that He assumed a fallen human nature.

The second philosophical thought pattern that influenced Sequeira's post-fall model of Jesus' human nature was this: If Jesus became a substitute for the fallen humanity, then, to be consistent with the law of substitution, He necessarily assumed a fallen human nature. He had to take upon His holy, divine nature, our fallen human nature, which needed redeeming. This is what qualified Him to be our substitute. Had Jesus assumed an unfallen human nature, He would have become unfallen humanity's substitute, but in Sequeira's opinion, Jesus did verily take a fallen human nature.

Third, the nature of temptation suggests that the human nature that Jesus assumed, was the very fallen human nature that all fallen human beings possess. To be tempted in all

points as we are (Heb 4:15), Jesus had to assume a fallen human nature. Sequeira suggests that the text is referring to temptation as it comes to fallen human beings and not as it came to unfallen human beings. To be tempted as unfallen human beings were tempted, Jesus needed to take the unfallen human nature of Adam, but if that had been the case, then born-again fallen human beings would not have had comfort in His temptations. His victory over temptation would then have been of no use to born-again fallen human beings who struggle with temptation. However, Scripture relates that He suffered while being tempted in the flesh (cf. 1 Pet 4:1). Had Jesus assumed an unfallen human nature, He would not have suffered in the flesh when He refused to give in to temptation in the sense suggested by Peter.

Fourth, Scripture presents Jesus as our example in holy living as well as in suffering (cf. 1 Pet 2:21). Sequeira's argument is that, for Jesus to be our example in holy living as well as suffering, He had to assume a fallen human nature. Otherwise He would have been an example in holy living for the unfallen Adam and not for born-again fallen human beings. Had Jesus assumed an unfallen humanity's nature, He would not have been an example to born-again fallen human beings in suffering.

Finally, the doctrine of Jesus' high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary suggests that He assumed a fallen human nature. To qualify to be our High Priest, He needed to assume our fallen human nature, except that, in His case, He needed to commit no sin. In the OT, the High Priest was chosen from among the children of Israel and never from outside. While Jesus would have been a human being if He had assumed the nature of an unfallen Adam, to be an insider as required by the law of priesthood, He needed to assume the nature of the fallen humanity. The people who needed a High Priest was not the unfallen humanity, but the fallen humanity. Therefore, in Sequeira's view, Jesus assumed the very fallen human nature that He found. The only difference is that, while all fallen human beings have sinned, Jesus did not commit any sin. In the fallen human nature, which was purged of the law of sin and glorified through the resurrection, Jesus represents born-again fallen human beings as our High Priest before God in the heavenly sanctuary. Because Jesus experienced temptation in the fallen human flesh that He



assumed, He is able to sympathise with born-again fallen human beings when they are tempted. He is both our perfect Saviour and merciful High Priest. He also gives us strength to overcome temptation.

My view of Sequeira's post-fall model of Jesus' human nature is that it is consistent with what is taught in Scripture. The arguments that Sequeira gives in support of the post-fall view are philosophically convincing. He demonstrates that it is possible to teach that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature, while maintaining His uniqueness. He also demonstrates that one can espouse the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature without necessarily becoming a legalist. Sequeira emphasises the High Priestly ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, which many Christologists neglect. He gives all theologians something to think about in terms of what specific human nature Jesus has assumed. However, his post-fall model of Jesus' human nature needs to be revised to what I have called a 'unique post-fall model', which I will discuss when presenting my personal submissions.

## CHAPTER 12

### CRITICAL EVALUATION:

### THE PRELAPSARIAN MODEL AS TAUGHT BY MILLARD J. ERICKSON

#### 12.1 Introduction

In chapter 11, I evaluated Sequeira's post-fall view of Jesus' humanity. I noted that his model adequately resolves the dual problem of sin. He formulates his model of Jesus' humanity after taking the contexts of pre-fall and post-fall human natures into consideration. He argues that, in order for Jesus to adequately resolve the dual problem of sin, He had to assume a post-fall human nature, both spiritually and physically. He notes, however, that Jesus was different from the rest of humanity because He was not a fallen, sinful human being, but *became* a fallen, sinful human being – He *became* what He was not by native right. He was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit and was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb. He lived a sinless life. There are problematic areas in Sequeira's Christology, which I pointed out. Finally, I noted that his model needs to be revised so that the aspect of Jesus' uniqueness is taken into consideration. In this chapter I will evaluate Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus' humanity.

Erickson argues that Jesus assumed the spiritual nature of an unfallen Adam and the physical nature of a fallen Adam. This model has been called the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature. I will evaluate this model following the pattern I used when evaluating the post-fall model of Sequeira. I will first point out significant contributions that Erickson has made to Christology. Then, I will point out what I think are problematic areas in his Christology. After that, I will discuss the philosophical categories and thought patterns that must have influenced Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature. After testing Erickson's model against the standard norm of the Bible, I will make personal observations on the pre-fall model, followed by a conclusion.

#### 12.2 Contributions to Christology

While there is very little that Erickson relates about the human nature of Jesus from which I can make a judgement as to what he believes, especially with respect to Jesus' Person,

there are a number of areas I can appreciate as his contributions to Christology. There are at least five areas in which Erickson makes a contribution to knowledge on the humanity of Jesus Christ, namely a systematic presentation of his Christology, the nature of sin, the nature of Jesus' temptation, Jesus as the standard humanity, and the argument that God created a sperm for the incarnation. I will discuss each of these contributions separately.

### **12.2.1 A Systematic Presentation of Christology**

Erickson has distinguished himself by writing a system. In his book, *The Word Became Flesh* (1991), he evaluates all the current theories on the incarnation of Jesus. He deals with questions about the divinity of Jesus, yet there is no comparable focus on His humanity. He explains that the reason that Jesus' human nature does not receive separate treatment, is because it is not a severely contested topic in contemporary Christology (Erickson 1991:14). While noting this failure on the part of Erickson to give adequate treatment to the humanity of Jesus, I wish to state that, by writing a system, *Christian Theology* (Erickson 2013), which I have been able to follow very well, he has made a significant contribution to Systematic Theology and to Christology in particular.

### **12.2.2 The Nature of Sin**

Another area in which Erickson has made a contribution to Christology is the nature of sin as it relates to the human nature of Jesus. In his view, sin is both a tendency that all human beings by virtue of being Adam's descendants are born with, and what they do in violation of God's law. In my opinion, what is significant about Erickson's comprehensive understanding of sin is that it enabled him to formulate a model of the humanity of Jesus that exempts Him from sin both in nature and in action. Erickson also suggests that one's position on the nature of sin determines the solution to the sin problem. To the question, What real difference does it make what position is taken on the issue of the cause of sin, Erickson (2013:547) responds that one's view of the cause of sin necessarily influences one's view of the cure for sin. This is because the cure for sin will necessarily require negating the cause. He laments that the problem is that descendants of Adam and Eve have not only inherited a sinful nature, but also live in a world in which demonic forces

seek to entice them to commit sin (Erickson 2013:547). This is an evangelical perspective of sin, which Erickson associates himself with. It must be noted, however, that for Erickson, Jesus was not sinful by nature and He did not assume a sinful human nature. Depravity or guilt from Mary was not conveyed to Jesus Christ (Erickson 2013:689). Related to the nature of sin is the nature of temptation.

### **12.2.3 The Nature of Temptation**

In Erickson's view, to human beings other than Jesus, inducements to sin come from the sinful nature as well as from outside. Erickson suggests that all human beings other than Jesus Christ are tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed (cf. James 1:14). Human beings are tempted through 'the flesh', which strongly influences what they do (Erickson 2013:546). By 'flesh', Paul did not mean the physical nature of the human being, since there is nothing inherently evil about the human bodily makeup. The term is reserved for a life which is self-centred, a life which denies or rejects God. It is something that has become part of the nature of humanity, a tendency of bias toward sin, an alienation from God and His will (Erickson 2013:546).

Erickson suggests that, in Jesus' temptation, Satan appealed to legitimate desires. Thus, the desires that Satan urged Jesus to fulfil, were normal human desires, but he suggested to Him to fulfil those desires at the wrong time and in a manner that did not agree with God's will (Erickson 2013:546). This would have constituted sin if Jesus had succumbed to the temptation. Satan took advantage of the fact that Jesus was hungry after He had fasted for 40 days and nights. It would therefore be wonderful for Jesus to be fed, but not through some miraculous provision and probably not before the completion of His trial (Erickson 2013:546). Desiring to come down safely from the pinnacle of the temple was proper for Jesus. However, to come down after displaying a miracle of divine power by the Father would have constituted sin (Erickson 2013:546). It is Erickson's contention that it would be good for Jesus to lay claim on all the kingdoms of the earth, for they are his – He had created them (John 1:3) and even now sustains them (Col 1:17) – but it would not be good to establish this claim by worshiping the commander of evil angels, being God's avowed enemy (Erickson 2013:546). Jesus' natural desires were the desire to eat, the

desire to come down safely from the pinnacle of the temple, and the desire to get back the kingdoms of the earth. In themselves, these desires were legitimate, but they would have become sin if Jesus had fulfilled them in the manner proposed by the devil.

After noting that oftentimes temptation involves inducements from outside, Erickson (2013:546) asserts that this was true in the case of Jesus. He observes that, in some cases another human being (or the devil) entices one to overstep the divinely imposed bounds on behaviour (Erickson 2013:546). This was the case with Jesus' temptation, in which the devil enticed Him to overstep the divinely imposed bounds on behaviour. In the final analysis, nevertheless, had Jesus sinned, the sin would have been His choice. Erickson asserts: 'The desire to do what is done may be present naturally, and there may be external inducement as well. But the individual is ultimately responsible. Adam and Eve chose to act upon impulse and suggestion; Jesus chose not to' (Erickson 2013:546).

For Erickson, Jesus was tempted in the same way that human nature in its unfallen state was tempted. Inducements come from outside and take advantage of one's natural desires. Human beings other than Jesus are tempted, using natural desires as well as 'the flesh', or what James called 'evil desires'. Thus, there is a similarity as well as a difference in the way Jesus was tempted and the way that other human beings are tempted.

Many Christologies emphasise the aspect of Jesus being tempted to use His inherent divine power to satisfy His needs independently of His Father, without also emphasising that He was equally tempted to satisfy His natural desires in a wrong way and at the wrong time (cf. e.g. Weber 1994:69-72; Adams 1994:73-85; Gulley 2012:454-457). Other Christologies emphasise the aspect of Jesus' temptations coming from the fallen human nature that He assumed and the enticement to use His inherent divinity to satisfy His needs without reference to His Father's will (cf. e.g. Wieland 1989:113-120; Sequeira [1993] 1999:147-151; 1996:152-161; Zurcher 1999:288-290). While Erickson exempts Jesus from the fallen human nature that all human beings are born with and hence from temptation through that fallen nature, he does explain Jesus' temptation in such a way that it is made to be common with the temptation that all human beings receive. For

instance, the desire to eat is a natural desire, which all human beings have, but to eat through stealing another person's food, becomes a wrong way of satisfying that desire. It would also be a sin to eat when God has said that one should not eat. If Jesus had eaten before the fast had come to a close, He would have sinned against God who had told Him to fast. Erickson could answer some of the questions I asked about Jesus' temptations, which other scholars who hold the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature fail to explain, because their focus is mainly on Jesus being tempted to use His inherent divine power independently of His Father.

#### **12.2.4 Jesus as the Standard Humanity**

Apart from making the contributions to Christology that I have already discussed, Erickson has also emphasised that Jesus is the standard humanity. While I may not agree with the context in which he presents Jesus as the standard humanity, I do appreciate his emphasis that Jesus did indeed become a human being. While I may not agree with Erickson in one aspect in which he claims that Jesus is the standard humanity, I do commend him in the area where I believe that he has indeed made a contribution to Christology.

Erickson (2013:671) suggests that, in thinking about the incarnation, we must not begin with the traditional concepts of humanity and deity, but with the recognition that the two are most fully known in Jesus Christ. He argues that we should not define humanity using our empirical observations of human nature as it is now, but by examining the humanity of Jesus, because Jesus is the ideal humanity. Jesus was not merely as human as we are in our fallen state, He was more human than we are (Erickson 2013:671): 'His humanity was certainly more compatible with deity than is the type of humanity that we now observe'. In Erickson's view, the incarnation is impossible when viewed from the concept of humanity drawn from our knowledge of existential rather than essential humanity (Erickson 2013:671). When humanity is viewed in this way, it is definitely incompatible with deity, for the one is finite, while the other is infinite. Unfortunately, our understanding of human nature has been formed by an inductive investigation of both ourselves and other humans as we find them around us. The humanity that we see in ourselves and those around us is an impaired, broken-down vestige of essential humanity

and it is difficult to imagine this kind of humanity being united with deity (Erickson 2013:671) – this is not the humanity that Jesus took on in the incarnation:

Jesus's humanity was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but that possessed by Adam and Eve from the creation and before their fall...Our humanity is not a standard by which we are to measure his. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured...There have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall), and Jesus' (Erickson 2013: 657-658).

I do not accept some of Erickson's assertions with respect to the type of human nature that Jesus assumed, but I do appreciate the fact that he does not shy away from taking a position on Jesus' human nature. He is certain that Jesus' humanity was that of Adam and Eve when they came out of God's hands and before they fell into sin. Thus, in his view, Jesus' was the standard humanity by which ours must be measured. I will get back to Erickson's assertion when looking at problematic areas in his Christology, but for now it suffices that he does take a clear position on the humanity of Jesus.

### **12.2.5 God Created a Sperm for the Incarnation**

Of all the contributions that Erickson has made to Christology with respect to the humanity of Jesus, the argument that God had to create a human sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum, is unique. I definitely do not agree with him on this point. Nevertheless, when I came across this argument, it gave me something to think about. As a matter of fact, it was this aspect of Erickson's Christology that motivated me to choose him to represent evangelical Christologists who espouse the pre-fall model of the humanity of Jesus. Erickson (2013: 686) argues:

Jesus was not produced after the genetic pattern of Mary alone, for in that case he would in effect have been a clone of her and would necessarily have been female. Rather, a male component was contributed. In other words, a sperm was united with the ovum

provided by Mary, but it was specially created for the occasion instead of being supplied by an existent male human.

There are many questions to this kind of assertion, but for the purposes of this discussion, I just want to mention that Erickson has challenged Christologists to venture outside the Bible into the realm of science to try and understand the incarnation. Whether or not this is the correct thing to do, is not my interest at this moment. My interest is to appreciate Erickson's contribution to Christology by venturing into science to explain the inexplicable. I will, however, get back to Erickson's argument when looking at problematic areas of his Christology in what follows.

### **12.3 Problematic Areas in Erickson's Christology**

While taking cognisance of Erickson's contributions to Christology, I will now discuss some problematic areas in his pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature. The areas of concern are as follows: Jesus took the pre-fall human nature; the nature of sin; the nature of Jesus' temptation; the work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation; God's image to allow for the incarnation; God created a sperm for the incarnation; the nature of Jesus' resurrection and ascension bodies; a perfected humanity; and a humanity which continues to be united with the deity.

#### **12.3.1 Jesus Took the Pre-fall Human Nature**

I begin this discussion of the problematic areas in Erickson's Christology with the pre-fall model itself. In my view, this is an inadequate model, because it does not resolve the dual problem of sin. There is a possibility that I do not correctly understand how Erickson relates his pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature to the dual problem of sin, but I could not find a clear link in Erickson's Christology between the human nature that Jesus took in the incarnation and the dual problem of sin. I find that, in his Christology, Erickson (2013:731-768) does discuss the work (atonement) of Jesus and takes the position that Jesus resolved the sin problem by dying a vicarious death on the cross. I have dealt with this aspect of Christology in my previous study at UNISA (Mwale 2015). Vicarious or substitutionary atonement as presented by Erickson does not address the aspect of how



Jesus dealt with sin as a law residing in the flesh of fallen humanity, for if Jesus did not take upon His holy, divine nature, our fallen human nature, how then did He deal with sin as nature?

In my view, in order to deal with sin as a law residing in a fallen human flesh, Jesus needed to take the very nature in which the law of sin resides. It is a mystery for God to become a human being. However, it is not a mystery for Jesus in an unfallen flesh to overcome temptation. This is because, in the spiritual nature of an unfallen Adam and Eve, Jesus only did what Adam and Eve could have done, had they not listened to Satan's suggestion. Adam and Eve did an unnatural thing by sinning against God. Their unfallen human nature was compatible with God's law. Therefore, if Jesus took upon Himself the pre-fall nature of Adam and Eve, then Satan tempted Him to do something unnatural to His spiritual nature. If this is the case, then our temptations in a fallen human nature are more difficult to overcome than the temptations that came to Jesus in His unfallen human nature. However, this would be to contradict Scripture's clear teaching that Jesus was indeed tempted as born-again fallen human beings are tempted, yet without sin (Heb 4:15).

The pre-fall model of Jesus' humanity is inadequate, because it fails to address the question of how Jesus qualified to become fallen humanity's substitute. In the pre-fall model, the second Person of the Godhead did indeed become a human being. In this way, it can be argued, He did become humanity's substitute. However, He would then become the unfallen humanity's substitute, and not the fallen humanity's substitute. To become the fallen humanity's substitute, the second Person of the Godhead needed to assume the nature of a fallen humanity. This is the only way that He could have qualified to become our substitute. The law of substitution requires one to be a substitute of another to whom one is related in a certain way. For instance, a teacher of biology cannot be substituted by a teacher of English. This is because the teacher of English was not trained as a teacher of biology. This applies to football as well: When contending for the world cup, a tired or injured Zambian player cannot be substituted by a South African player.

Similarly, a Jesus with an unfallen nature could not become a substitute for humanity with a fallen nature. This would contradict the law of substitution.

There is another area in which the pre-fall model as taught by Erickson presents itself as being inadequate. The Bible, in the book of Hebrews, presents Jesus as having become a High Priest ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. If Jesus had assumed an unfallen human nature, He would not have qualified to become the fallen humanity's High Priest. The qualifications for the office of High Priest would not have allowed Him to become the born-again fallen humanity's High Priest (cf. Heb 5:1-11). Related to the pre-fall model is the aspect of the nature of sin.

### **12.3.2 The Nature of Sin in Relation to Jesus' Human Nature**

There is no doubt that Erickson's view of sin is comprehensive. He clearly asserts that fallen human beings are sinners by nature as well as by performance. The fact that human beings are sinners by nature, makes them sinners by performance, because in sinning, they consent to the desires of their sinful flesh. By 'sinners by nature' is meant that human beings are born with the inherent tendency to commit sin, as Erickson (2013:570) opines: 'We do not merely do evil; our very inclination is evil'. In his view, 'sin is not merely wrong acts and thoughts, but sinfulness as well, an inherent inner disposition inclining us to wrong acts and thoughts' (Erickson 2013:528). As already noted, Erickson exempts Jesus from inherent sin. Jesus did not only overcome temptation; there was no tendency to sin in His human flesh. Erickson postulates: 'For those of us who live after the fall and are not Jesus, there is a further complicating factor. There is something termed "the flesh", which strongly influences what we do' (Erickson 2013:546). This raises the question of how God condemned sin in Jesus' flesh, which was exempt from the law of sin that resides in the fallen humanity's flesh (cf. Rom 7:23; 8:3). It has been suggested that Jesus dealt with sin as nature through His vicarious death. The truth, however, is that sin as nature needed to be assumed and then be condemned in the flesh of the substitute. It could not just be transferred from all the sinners to Jesus. There is NT evidence that sins were transferred from the sinner to Jesus, the Substitute (cf. e.g. 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 3:5). However, there is no NT evidence that sin as nature was also transferred from the

sinner to Jesus. The NT seems to suggest that sin as nature was condemned in Jesus' flesh, which He assumed through the incarnation (cf. John 1:1-3, 14, 29; Rom 8:3).

Erickson (2013:582) asserts: 'The current form of my understanding is as follows: We all were involved in Adam's sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the *guilt* and condemnation that attach to his sin' (emphasis added). I do agree with this assertion that we receive Adam's corrupted nature and condemnation. However, I do not agree with him that we receive Adam's *guilt*. This is because guilt is not transferrable. What we are by nature cannot make us guilty of Adam's sin. We become guilty when we personally sin against God. In my view, Jesus received the corrupted and condemned nature of a fallen Adam (cf. Rom 5:12-21; John 3:6), but not his *guilt*. Therefore, in suggesting that we receive *guilt* from our parents as well, Erickson labours unnecessarily. As already noted, since *guilt* involves personal volition (cf. Ezek 18:4, 20), it cannot be transferred from one person to another. However, corruption in human nature and condemnation can be transferred, since they do not necessarily require that one should do wrong in order for one to be affected by them. Fallen human beings inherit a corrupt nature from their parents, for it is not possible for the parents to not pass on to their descendants that which became part of their nature as a result of Adam's sin. Also, since Adam received condemnation when he sinned against God, the life he passed on to his descendants is a condemned life. Another problematic area of Erickson's Christology is the nature of Jesus' temptation.

### **12.3.3 The Nature of Jesus' Temptation**

Erickson (2013:545) suggests that God has implanted certain needs in each of us, the satisfaction of which is not necessarily wrong. For instance, the need for food and drink must be satisfied because life is impossible without it. Food and drink may also be legitimately desired for as a source of enjoyment. However, when food and drink are pursued merely for the pleasure of consumption and in excess of what is needed, the sin of gluttony is being committed (Erickson 2013:545). It is also sin to satisfy the need for food and drink in ways that transcend natural and proper boundaries. We may legitimately desire the satisfaction of the sex drive because it is essential for procreation and also

because it brings pleasure. Nevertheless, when the sex drive is gratified in ways that transcend natural and proper limitations, it becomes the basis of sin (Erickson 2013:545). Erickson suggests that any improper satisfaction of a natural desire is an instance of 'the lust of the flesh' (1 John 2:16). The desire to do and achieve things is in keeping with biblical stewardship principles as depicted by the stewardship parables (see for instance Matt 25:14-30). Nevertheless, when this urge transgresses proper limitations and is pursued at the expense of other humans, it has generated into the 'the pride of life' (1 John 2:16). The desire to obtain things has a role in God's economy. It is implicit in the command to have dominion over the world (Gen 1:28) and in the stewardship parables. However, when the desire to acquire worldly goods becomes so compelling that it is satisfied at any cost, even by exploiting or stealing from others, then it has generated into 'the lust of the eyes' (1 John 2:16) (Erickson 2013:545).

There are, therefore, proper ways to satisfy each of the natural desires and there are also divinely imposed limits. In this light, Erickson (2013:545-546) asserts: 'Failure to accept these desires as they have been constituted by God and therefore to submit to divine control is sin'. It implies that the desires are not seen in the context of their divine origin and as means to the end of pleasing God, but as ends in themselves.

Erickson (2013:546) opines that, in Jesus' temptations, Satan appealed to legitimate desires. Satan tempted Jesus to do things that were not in themselves sinful, but he enticed Him to satisfy them in ways that transcended properly instituted limitations. It must be observed that oftentimes temptation involves an inducement from outside. Jesus was tempted from outside (Erickson 2013:546). In Erickson's view, 'The desire to do what is done may be present naturally, and there may be external inducement as well. But the individual is ultimately responsible' (Erickson 2013:546). Erickson asserts that 'Adam and Eve chose to act upon impulse and suggestion; Jesus chose not to' (Erickson 2013:546).

I agree with Erickson when he avers that Satan appealed to Jesus' legitimate desires. I also agree when he suggests that Jesus' temptation involved an inducement from outside. However, I need clarification when he states that '[t]he desire to do what is done

may be present naturally, and there may be external inducement as well. But the individual is ultimately responsible. Adam and Eve chose to act upon impulse and suggestion; Jesus chose not to' (Erickson 2013:546).

The question I have for Erickson is this: Can there be a desire to do a wrong thing in an unfallen human being without external inducement? It would appear that, for Erickson, a desire to do wrong may be naturally present in a perfect person. He states for instance: 'While the desire to eat of the tree or to be like God may have been present naturally, there was also an external inducement of satanic origin' (Erickson 2013:546). How can a desire to do a wrong act be *naturally* in an individual who has never done that act before? Was it possible for Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil without an inducement from Satan? If there had been no Satan to suggest to the first woman that eating of that tree would make her wise and be like God (Gen 3:1-6), would the woman naturally have desired to be like God? In other words, would sin have developed in human beings if there had been no Satan to tempt our first parents? In what sense does Erickson suggest that a desire to do what is done may be there naturally? Was there ever a desire to do a wrong act in Jesus, which He chose not to do?

The freedom of choice that God gave to human beings had in itself an implied suggestion that they would choose to either obey or not. God said: 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen 2:16-17). Would the first human beings then have developed a desire to eat of the forbidden tree without external inducement? Erickson's suggestion that a desire to do what is done may be naturally there, requires to be substantiated, especially when made in the context of the unfallen human beings. Otherwise, it may suggest that God created human beings with a potential to do what is wrong, even without external inducement.

There is empirical evidence that sin can arise in a created being without external inducement. It did arise in Lucifer who turned into Satan (cf. Is 14:12-14; Ezek 28:11-19), although his sin is inexplicable. Why sin could arise in a perfect being without external

inducement, is a mystery. Biblically, the case of the first human beings is different from that of Lucifer. There does not seem to have been a natural desire to do wrong in the first human beings, until an external inducement came from Satan. There was no desire in the first woman to be *like* God until Satan suggested that, by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she would become *like* God. Therefore, Erickson's suggestion that the desire to eat of the tree or to be like God may have been naturally present, casts a shadow on God's perfect creation. Without a clarification from Erickson, this statement must be rejected. It should not be made with respect to unfallen human beings, not even to *his* Jesus who took an unfallen human nature. The only way Adam and Eve could have sinned without an external inducement was on the basis of Satan's sin in a perfect environment in heaven. Unfortunately, we do not know why Satan sinned.

In my view, it is true that a desire to do a wrong act may be naturally present in born-again fallen human beings. This is in perfect agreement with James 1:14, that states: 'But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed'. Satan takes advantage of the desire already present in the person he has enticed. Erickson (2013: 546) suggests that, in addition to natural desire and temptation, there must be an opportunity for sin as well. Initially, when there was only one woman present, Adam could not have been tempted to infidelity to his wife, nor could Eve have been jealous of other women (Erickson 2013:546). However, would the desire to have sex with other women been in Adam, if those women had been available, but without an external inducement? It seems to me that Erickson confuses natural desire for a human need and natural desire to do wrong. In unfallen human beings, there was never a desire to do wrong before Satan induced them. Therefore, they could only have been enticed to do wrong, or to indulge a need outside the properly instituted limitations. In fallen human beings there are desires which are natural and which need to be legitimately fulfilled. Nevertheless, there are also evil desires called the desires or lusts of 'the flesh' (Gal 5:16; 1 John 2:16). In this light, Erickson comments: 'For those of us who live after the fall and are not Jesus, there is a further complicating factor. There is something termed "the flesh", which strongly influences what we do' (Erickson 2013:546).

A following question would be: If Jesus was exempted from the tendency or bias toward sin, how was He tempted as fallen human beings are tempted? Hebrews 4:15 clearly relates: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin'. To Erickson, this text would simply mean that Jesus was tempted as human nature is tempted, which I have already referred to. Nevertheless, the book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrew Christians. The author used the phrase 'tempted in all points as we are', not in reference to how unfallen human beings are tempted, but how born-again fallen human beings are tempted. The immediate and general contexts of the statement are very important. In my view, Jesus was tempted in the same way in which the Hebrew Christians and for that matter, all of us, were tempted. Jesus was tempted as born-again fallen human beings are tempted (cf. James 1:14).

By exempting Jesus from the tendency or bias to sin that all fallen human beings are born with, Erickson takes away the comfort that born-again fallen human beings are supposed to get from Jesus' victory over temptation. In addition, Jesus ceases to be an example in overcoming temptation and in holy living. His temptations also become less severe than those that born-again fallen human beings experience. Erickson would clearly not agree with this. Nevertheless, his view of Jesus' temptation with respect to the law of sin that resides in all fallen human beings, suggests the conclusions I have drawn. He argues that Jesus' temptations were more severe than those that born-again fallen human beings experience because, in Jesus' case, there was an inherent divinity to which He could have easily appealed independently of His Father's will. Nevertheless, it was more tempting to appeal to the inherent divine power in a fallen human nature than it was in an unfallen human nature, because in an unfallen human nature the temptation is to do what is unnatural to that nature. In the fallen human nature, the temptation is to do what is natural to that nature. Therefore, the argument does not help in any way. Another problematic area of Erickson's Christology has to do with how Jesus was exempted from the law of sin that all fallen human beings inherit from their parents, which I will discuss in the next section.

#### **12.3.4 The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation**

Erickson makes it very clear that Jesus was not tainted by the corrupted nature of Adam, when he asserts: 'Not only did he not sin himself (Heb. 4:15), but he was not tainted by the corrupted nature of Adam' (Erickson 2013:558). The question that naturally arises from this argument, is: If all human beings are born with a corrupt nature, would Mary not have contributed this corruption to the human nature of Jesus? How does Erickson view the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation? After quoting Luke 1:35, Erickson opines: 'It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or guilt from Mary to Jesus. Without that special sanctifying influence, he would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have' (Erickson 2013:689).

This view is supported by Grudem (2015:531-532) who, in rejecting the Roman Catholic view of the immaculate conception of Mary, argues: 'A better solution is to say that the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary must have prevented not only the transmission of sin from Joseph (for Jesus had no human father) but also, in a miraculous way, the transmission of sin from Mary'. Adams (1994:71) also support the view that the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to bypass the universal infection of sin. It would appear that Gulley whose Christology will be evaluated later, exempts Jesus from sin as nature, using the same argument.

The questions relating to this statement are: What really was the work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation? Was it to prevent Jesus from receiving sin as nature from Mary? Was it to bring about a conception in Mary, which would not have been possible, since Mary was not yet married? Was it to bring about a special creation, not in the sense of the first person's creation? What is really the correct interpretation of Luke 1:35?

In the KJV, the angel Gabriel responds to Mary's question and says: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). The translation in the NKJV reads as follows: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be



born will be called the Son of God'. The translation of the ESV states: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God'. The NASB gives the following translation: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason, the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God'. The RSV suggests: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God'. In the LESB we read: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God'. In the Greek, the angel's response goes like this: '*hagion pneuma epeleusetai epi se kai dynamis hypsistou episkiasai soi dio to gennomenon klethesetai hagion huios theou*' (Schwandt 2019:288). These Bible versions do not differ much in the translation of the original text.

In my view, to interpret the words of the angel Gabriel correctly, we should discuss the immediate context, which is actually Mary's forthcoming conception announced by the angel Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:31). Mary is a virgin and naturally she asks: 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' (Luke 1:34, NIV). Luke 1:35 is the response of the angel Gabriel to Mary's question. What Mary implies with her question to the angel, is: 'All women who conceive do so after having intercourse with men. I have never had intercourse with a man. So, how am I going to conceive?' The angel is thus telling Mary how she is going to conceive. God the Father will send the Holy Spirit to Mary, through whom the Father's power will overshadow her. The mystery of the incarnation will take place when the power of God has overshadowed Mary and, since the one who will be born will not only be a human being, but also a holy, divine person, He will be called the Son of God, not in the sense that Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38), but in a unique sense (John 1:14, 18). God will *become* flesh.

It is important to take note that the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation was not to prevent the transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus. The Holy Spirit's role was to bring about the incarnation of the second Person of the Godhead. The work of the Holy Spirit was to prepare Jesus' human body from Mary's material and to unite it to the divine nature

of the second Person of the Godhead. This is what accords with the context of the text under discussion. Therefore, scholars such as Erickson, who use this text to exempt Jesus from the law of sin that all fallen human beings are born with, probably do so with the view to be in accord with the philosophical thought which argues that if Jesus had received the tendency to sin from Mary, then He would Himself have been a sinner in need of salvation (cf. Gulley 2012:434). This is because, on the basis of the doctrine of original sin, all human beings are born with a tendency or bias to sin. Therefore, to prevent Jesus from assuming a human nature that is inherently bent toward sin, Luke 1:35 is interpreted with a bias toward the pre-fall model of the human nature of Jesus. As a matter of fact, Erickson (2013:689) himself does suggest that, without the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus would have been born with a human nature exactly like ours.

The pre-fall model of the human nature of Jesus stands on the interpretation of Luke 1:35. If that interpretation is found to be faulty as my argument suggests, the pre-fall model would fall. The other texts that proponents of the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature use, do not refer to Jesus' unfallen human nature, but to His perfect performance. Because of their bias toward their pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature, scholars such as Erickson see in those texts the sinlessness of Jesus in His human nature. These texts include John 8:46: 'Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?'; John 14:30: 'I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me'; 2 Corinthians 5:21: 'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'; Hebrews 7:26: 'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens'; 1 Peter 2:22: '...who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth' (cf. Is 53:9); and 1 John 3:5: 'And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin'. Jesus 'knew no sin' and 'in Him there is no sin', because He did not commit sin. When interpreted with their contexts in mind, all these texts refer to Jesus' performance as a human being, fully dependent on the Holy Spirit. Other texts, such as Luke 1:35 and John 6:69, may refer to the holy, divine nature of Jesus as suggested by the context. As a matter of fact, the NKJV translates John 6:69 as, 'Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ,

the Son of the living God', thus identifying Jesus with His divine origin, and not with an inherently sinless human nature as it is suggested by the proponents of the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature.

That the emphasis in Luke 1:35 relates to how Mary was going to conceive, is confirmed by the angel's message to Joseph, which was given after Mary had already conceived: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, *for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit*. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:20, 21; emphasis added). Joseph was told that Mary had not played the harlot to conceive. What he had seen in Mary was a confirmation of the mystery of the incarnation. In a mysterious way, Mary had conceived without the involvement of the act of sex, which was natural in all the conceptions that he had seen and heard of. It was not a mere human being developing in Mary's womb, it was the God-Man – God had *become* flesh in Mary's womb. What was developing in Mary's womb was a human being with a quiescent divine nature in Him.

As already noted, the fact that Jesus was said to be 'the Holy One', did not suggest that He had assumed the pre-fall human nature. The angel was either referring to His divine nature, which is inherently holy, or to Him as the God-Man. In my view, as the God-Man, Jesus was holy, even though His human nature was not after the pre-fall model. In other words, where the holy, divine nature had united with the unholy, human nature, the product would be holy. The 'unholy' would not make the 'holy' 'unholy'. The net effect of all this is that the Holy Spirit did not play the role of 'sanctifier' of Mary, so that Jesus should be born with the spiritual nature of the unfallen Adam. He also did not play the role of 'sanctifier' of the human nature of Jesus. Instead, the Holy Spirit brought about Mary's conception, which is the mystery of all mysteries. By the power of God working through the Holy Spirit, the second Person of the Godhead *became* human in Mary's womb. This was a mystery.

It should be mentioned that, to suggest that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception is not biblically correct, while maintaining that transmission of

original sin from Mary to Jesus was prevented by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is a contradiction in terms. For, if the Holy Spirit could prevent transmission of the tendency or bias to sin from Mary to Jesus, why did He not prevent the same transmission from Eve to her children? If we argue that there is an involvement of a male factor in the other conceptions, we will in effect imply that sin as nature is transmitted through the male factor. Erickson (2013:689) himself clearly states that this is not the case. There is a suggestion that the virgin conception was indispensable to the sinlessness of Jesus (Von Campenhausen 1964:79-86). Erickson (2013:689), however, justifiably rejects this argument when he gives a counter argument: 'But this argument seems to suggest that we too would be sinless if we did not have a male parent'. The implication of Erickson's argument is that the virginal conception was not indispensable to the sinlessness of Jesus. He maintains that, if there had been no virgin birth, Jesus would still have been a special creation just like Adam was a special creation (Erickson 2013:688): 'Accordingly it should have been possible for Jesus to have two human parents and to be fully the God-man nonetheless'. He adds: 'We conclude that Jesus's sinlessness was not dependent on the virginal conception' (Erickson 2013:688). However, I want to suggest that the God-Man coming through Erickson's way, would not have been the God-Man envisioned by the Triune Council. The point I want to stress is that the God-Man of the Triune Council was the one who came in the way that is described in Luke 1:35. The truth is that we do not really know how God did it.

The virginal conception, according to Erickson (2013:690), is significant for four reasons: 1) It is a reminder that our salvation is supernatural; 2) it is a reminder that God's salvation is a gift of grace; 3) it is evidence of the uniqueness of Jesus as Saviour; and 4) it is evidence of God's power over nature. If the virginal conception was not indispensable to the sinlessness of Jesus' human nature, then it remains that, as Erickson suggests, the sinlessness of Jesus was preserved by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. However, was that really so? I maintain that the role of the Holy Spirit was to prepare Jesus' human nature and unite it to His divine nature, and not to prevent the transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus. The role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation was to unite our human nature to God's divine nature to come up with the God-Man. Why God chose not to involve

a human father, is beyond human conception. On this point, I am basically in agreement with Erickson's argument, although I refute the idea that the transmission of the so-called original sin from Mary to Jesus was prevented by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Behind Erickson's reasoning on this point is the same Roman Catholic reasoning that suggests that the work of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin from Mary's mother to Mary and finally to Jesus. It creates the question: Why did the same Holy Spirit not prevent the transmission of sin from Eve to every other descendant? Would that not have made His work of salvation much easier? The struggle with sin as nature, which all fallen human beings experience, would have been taken away. I conclude that Erickson's view that the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus cannot be biblically supported. It is based on a philosophical thought pattern that is in itself faulty. This takes me to Erickson's argument that Jesus is the standard human being.

### **12.3.5 Jesus as the Standard Humanity**

There is definitely some truth in Erickson's assertion that Jesus is the standard humanity. Nevertheless, his proposal of what made Jesus the standard humanity needs to be examined in the context of the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity and the reasons for the incarnation. I have already stated that Erickson (2013:671) argues that the humanity that Jesus took upon Himself was (spiritually) the humanity of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. He proposes that, instead of asking whether Jesus is as human as we are, we should ask: 'Are we as human as Jesus?' (Erickson 2013:657). The reason for this, in his opinion, is because 'the type of human nature that each of us possesses is not pure human nature. The pure humanity created by God has in our case been corrupted and spoiled' (Erickson 2013:657). Erickson is correct when he claims that the pure humanity created by God has in our case been corrupted and spoiled. I must add that none of us has been able to perfectly obey God in the corrupted and spoiled human nature that is ours by virtue of the fall of Adam and Eve. Erickson therefore correctly asserts that 'the rest of us are but broken, corrupted versions of humanity' (Erickson 2013:657). Nevertheless, his statement that '[t]here have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall), and Jesus' (Erickson 2013:657), needs to be analysed and

evaluated in the context of his pre-fall model and the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity. In what sense does Erickson suggest that 'Jesus is not only as human as we are; he is more human'? Erickson is correct when he comments: 'Our humanity is not a standard by which we are to measure his [Jesus']' (Erickson 2013:657-658). However, his statement that 'His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured' (Erickson 2013:658), needs critical evaluation.

In my view, because the mission of Jesus was to save fallen human beings from *SIN* and *sins*, and that this mission involved becoming the fallen humanity's substitute, He had to assume the nature of humanity in the state He found it, except in *sinning*. If this is the case, Erickson's argument that Jesus took the nature of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin, must be rejected, and if the human nature that Jesus took was that of the fallen humanity, then His human nature was not the standard human nature. Paul stated: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3). It seems unlikely that this text is referring to Jesus' pre-fall human nature as Erickson suggests. The Greek term ὁμοιώματι (likeness) is the same one used in Philippians 2:7, where Paul wrote that Jesus 'emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness [ὁμοιώματι] of men' (ESV). My argument is that, if ὁμοιώματι in Philippians 2:7 refers to Jesus being truly human, then there is a big possibility that it has the same meaning in Romans 8:3. If ὁμοιώματι in Romans 8:3 refers to the fact that Jesus did not assume a sinful flesh, then in Philippians 2:7, it must mean that He was not really a human being, but was just like a human being. Erickson would definitely not accept this, for he clearly teaches that Jesus was truly human. Nevertheless, his pre-fall model, when followed to its logical conclusion, suggests the conclusions drawn from my reasoning above.

Scholars such as Zurcher have interpreted Romans 8:3 just as I have done. Zurcher argues that the term ὁμοιώματι 'emphasizes resemblance, similitude, identity, but not difference' (Zurcher 1999:292). He asserts: 'In the three passages where the expression

is used, it always indicates an identity of nature that has to do with resemblance to the flesh (Rom. 8:3), with man (Phil. 2:7), or with temptation (Heb. 2:17)' (Zurcher 1999:292).

In my opinion, the argument that Jesus is the standard humanity, based on Erickson's pre-fall model of His human nature, does not cohere with Scriptural evidence. Therefore, this argument must be rejected. I have already stated that the Holy Spirit did not in the incarnation play the role of 'sanctifier'. His role was to prepare Jesus' human nature and unite it to His divine nature. There is no Scriptural evidence that Jesus bypassed the transmission of the law of sin, which all fallen human beings are born with. The teaching that Jesus bypassed the transmission of the law of sin from Mary, is based on philosophical reasoning, and not on Scripture. In other words, the philosophical reasoning behind this teaching does not pass the scrutiny of Scripture.

It must be noted, however, that there is a sense in which Jesus is the standard humanity. Scripture does teach that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are tempted, but He obeyed His Father perfectly (cf. Heb 4:15). Erickson (2013:655-656) makes it clear that Jesus did not commit any sin and refers to the following didactic or directly declaratory texts: Hebrews 7:26: 'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens'; Hebrews 9:14: 'How much more shall the blood of Jesus, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'; John 6:69 (ESV): '[A]nd we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God'; 1 Peter 2:22: '...who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth'; 1 John 3:5: 'And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin'; and 2 Corinthians 5:21: 'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'.

Erickson (2013:656) asserts that Jesus Himself explicitly and implicitly claimed to be righteous. For instance, Jesus asked His hearers: 'Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?' (John 8:46). He also said: 'And He who sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone, for I always do those things that please

Him' (John 8:29). He further asserted: 'If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love' (John 15:10). Jesus taught His disciples to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness, but there is no report of His ever-confessing sin and asking forgiveness on His own behalf. The Gospel narratives report that Jesus went to the temple, but there is no record of His ever-offering sacrifice for Himself and His sins. The only charge brought against Jesus was blasphemy, but being God, Jesus did not blaspheme by claiming to have power to forgive sins and to be the Son of God.

Erickson (2013:656) suggests that some people in the Bible made statements which, while not having absolute proof of Jesus' sinlessness, they give ample testimonies of His innocence of the charges for which He was crucified. In this light, Pirate's wife warned: 'Have nothing to do with that Just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him' (Matt 27:19). The thief on the cross said: 'And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong' (Luke 23:41). Regretting the role, he had played in betraying the Son of Man, Judas stated: 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood' (Matt 27:4).

According to Erickson (2013:656), Jesus' sinlessness is confirmed by the narratives in the Gospels. A survey of the Gospel narratives reveals that Jesus was tempted, but not one of them suggests any sin committed by Him. Thus, Erickson asserts: 'Nothing reported of him [Jesus] is in conflict with God's revealed law of right and wrong; everything he did was in conjunction with the Father' (Erickson 2013:656). He adds: 'Thus, on the basis of both direct affirmation and silence on certain points, we must conclude that the Bible uniformly witnesses to the sinlessness of Jesus' (Erickson 2013:656).

Erickson (2013:656) observes that there are some scholars who contend that Jesus did sin. For instance, Ferré (1958:110-114) detects in Jesus' behaviour a lack of perfect trust in the Father which, in his view, constitutes the sin of unbelief. Nevertheless, Erickson (2013:656) regards Ferré's as a faulty exegesis. He argues that Ferré's view of sin is heavily influenced by existential, rather than biblical, concepts.



Another important question to ask is whether Jesus was really human if He never sinned. Erickson (2013:656) puts it this way: '[W]as the humanity of Jesus, if free from all sin of nature and of active performance, the same as our humanity?' I have already dealt with the aspect of 'sin as nature' and concluded that Jesus' humanity was not a standard humanity in this respect, for in the human nature that He assumed, the law of sin existed. Therefore, I only need to consider the aspect of Jesus not sinning. Erickson observes that, to some scholars, one is only human when one is tempted and then sins (Erickson 2013:656). This leads to Erickson's following question: 'Does not sinlessness then take Jesus completely out of our class of humanity?' (Erickson 2013:656). In my view, sinlessness in Jesus' human nature does indeed take Him completely out of our class of humanity, but sinlessness in active performance does confirm that it is possible to obey God. Therefore, Erickson is correct when he suggests: 'This question casts doubt on the genuineness of the temptations of Jesus' (Erickson 2013:656). I concur with Erickson that Jesus' temptations were real and that He was tempted as human beings are tempted. Therefore, the argument of Taylor (1936:94) that, if a man does not commit certain transgressions, it must mean that he never felt the appeal of them, must be rejected. Erickson (2013:656-657) is correct when he asserts: 'The underlying assumption seems to be that if something is possible, it must become actual, and that, conversely, something that never occurs or never becomes actual must not really have been possible'. The truth is that Jesus did indeed struggle with temptation as His agony in Gethsemane indicates (Luke 22:39-46). However, it was not in a sinless human nature that He experienced the struggle.

The following question comes to mind: Does a person who does not succumb to temptation really feel it, or does that person not, as Taylor has contended? Morris suggests that the reverse of Taylor's contention is true, for the person who resists, is the one who knows the full force of temptation. It would appear that sinlessness in active performance and not in human nature points to a more intense, rather than less intense temptation. Morris (1958:51-52) puts it this way:

The man who yields to a particular temptation has not felt its full power. He has given in while the temptation has yet something in

reserve. Only the man who does not yield to a temptation, who, as regards that particular temptation, is sinless, knows the full extent of that temptation.

Jesus was indeed the standard humanity, although it was not in His human nature that He was sinless – it was in His active performance that He was the standard humanity. Therefore, Erickson's assertion that Jesus was the standard humanity is not completely true.

In my view there was a time in Jesus' earthly life that He became the standard humanity in both His human nature and His active performance: This was when He was resurrected from the grave. After He took care that the fallen human nature He had assumed, perfectly obeyed God, He went with that nature to the cross where it died eternally. Through His resurrection, the fallen human nature He had assumed, was taken away from Him. He left the grave with a glorified human nature, which could be said to be identical to the human nature that Adam and Eve possessed before they fell into sin. Erickson (2013:671) argues: 'His was, spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified'. Jesus' humanity was 'that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall' (Erickson 2013:671). In my view, these two statements are only true of Jesus after His resurrection. Erickson asserts: 'His humanity was certainly more compatible with deity than is the type of humanity that we now observe' (Erickson (2013:671). This statement is true in as far as Jesus' active performance was concerned, for He did not commit sin (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22). Nevertheless, Jesus struggled with the human nature that He assumed, because Scripture suggests that it was the very nature in which the law of sin dwells. Thus, in itself, the human nature that Jesus assumed, was not more compatible with the deity than is the type of humanity that we now observe. Except in actual sinning, Jesus' human nature was the very human nature that we now observe. This is what Scripture seems to teach. I will say more about this when giving my personal submissions at the end of the thesis. For now, I will discuss Erickson's argument that God created human beings in His image to allow for the incarnation.

### **12.3.6 Created in God's Image to Facilitate the Incarnation**

Erickson (2013:672) makes this statement: 'It is quite possible that part of God's purpose in making humanity in his own image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place'. He is correct when he argues that, as the image of God, the human is already the creature closest to God (Erickson 2013:672). It is true that human beings are distinct creatures from all other creatures. I therefore concur with Erickson when he claims: 'The assumption that humans are so dissimilar from God that the two cannot coexist in one person is probably based upon some other model of human nature' (Erickson 2013:672). Critics of the incarnation probably base their argument on the assumption that the human is basically an animal that has evolved from lower forms of life (Erickson 2013:672). Erickson has done a good job in defending the doctrine of the incarnation. However, his statement, 'It is quite possible that part of God's purpose in making humanity in his image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place', goes overboard. I know that, in God's plan, the incarnation was included before human beings were even created, for God made a provision to save humanity in case of falling into sin (cf. Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8). He is omniscient; therefore, He knew that human beings were going to sin. However, is it correct to argue that 'it is quite possible that part of God's purpose in making humanity in his image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place' (Erickson 2013:672)? Does this reasoning not suggest that, if it had not been for the incarnation, which would someday take place, God would have created humanity in a form not necessarily in His image?

The creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2 tell us nothing about the possibility that part of God's purpose in making humanity in His image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place. Of course, in my view, God begins to reveal His plan to save humanity in Genesis 3:15. The prophecy of the birth of Jesus was given to the prophet Isaiah: 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Is 7:14). The apostle Matthew claims that this prophecy was fulfilled when Mary conceived (Matt 1:22-23). It is possible to conclude from these texts and from what happened at the time of Jesus' conception and birth that, since Jesus became incarnate in a human being who at the beginning was

created in the image of God, that part of God's purpose in making humanity in His image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place. Thus, Erickson's statement is philosophically tenable.

Nevertheless, since God did not say anything about His purpose in making humanity in His image in relation to the incarnation, we need to remain silent on the matter. We are wiser in saying nothing where God is silent, than to speculate. The incarnation is a mystery, which will always remain so. Mary had to ask the angel Gabriel: 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' (Luke 1:34, NIV). And the response was given: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). From the time God made the promise of the coming Messiah, His people lived in expectation. However, they knew nothing about the incarnation as we, who live after it, happen to know it. The incarnation was a singular, unrepeatable event.

Barclay (2009b:16) asserts: 'The Jews had a saying that in the birth of every child there are three partners – the father, the mother and the Spirit of God. They believed that no child could 'ever be born without the Spirit'. Granted that this is true in the case of every child, I should still observe that the role of the Holy Spirit in the case of Jesus was different. In Jesus' case, the Holy Spirit brought about a conception without a male human parent being involved. It was not a matter of seeing that the woman's ovum is fertilised by the man's sperm, it was about the Holy Spirit preparing Jesus' human nature and joining it to His divine nature. How this happened is a mystery.

Erickson's suggestion that it is possible that a part of God's purpose in making humanity in His own image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place, while made in rebuttal to the critics of the incarnation, is based on the same reasoning that the critics base their arguments. This is true, as Erickson, while supporting the incarnation, rejects the idea that the second Person of the Godhead took a fallen human nature. This is because, in His view, 'we are not true human beings, but impaired, broken-down vestiges of essential humanity, and it is difficult to imagine this kind of humanity united

with deity' (Erickson 2013:671). According to Erickson, the fallen humanity could not have been united to a deity. Similarly, the critics of the incarnation find it difficult to imagine how God could become incarnate in Mary's womb, not because Mary was a fallen human being, but because the deity and humanity are diametrically different. God is the self-existent Creator, while we are His creatures. How could the self-existent Creator be united to a creature?

My view is that, instead of speculating about God having made humanity in His own image in relation to the incarnation, we simply need to accept the fact that the two natures (the divine and human) are not incompatible, for they once did coexist in one Person, Jesus Christ (cf. Barth 1960:46-47). This is important, concerning the incarnation, to take into consideration the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity, for God brought about the incarnation because sin had affected humanity. The incarnation was necessitated by the fall of humanity. Had humanity not fallen into sin, the incarnation would not have taken place. Therefore, Erickson's assertion that it is possible that it was part of God's purpose in making humanity in His image to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place, must be rejected for a lack of biblical support. It suggests that had it not been for the future incarnation, which was to take place, God would probably not have created human beings in His image. The truth, however, is that God would still have created humanity in His image if there had been no future incarnation in contemplation. Another problematic area in Erickson's Christology involves his argument that God had to create a sperm for the purpose of the incarnation.

### **12.3.7 God Created a Sperm for the Incarnation**

In my view, the most controversial of Erickson's Christology is his argument that God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum to produce the human side of the God-Man. In his view, if God had used Mary's genetic material alone to produce Jesus Christ, He would have been a clone of Mary and necessarily female. This is because it is a well-known genetic fact that male human beings possess X and Y sex chromosomes. Female human beings possess two X sex chromosomes. Thus, in sexual reproduction, for a male human being to be formed, the man must contribute an Y chromosome, while the woman must

contribute an X chromosome. For a female human being to be formed, the man and the woman must each contribute an X chromosome.

There is no question about Jesus being male. Isaiah already made this prediction: 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Is 7:14); 'For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, [and] Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this' (Is 9:6-7). These Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in the incarnation (cf. Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-38).

The question is: Since Mary possessed two X sex chromosomes, but her Son, Jesus, was male, where did the Y sex chromosome, that made Jesus male, come from? It is in response to this philosophical question that Erickson speculates that God created a sperm specifically for the occasion of the incarnation. Erickson seems to give this philosophical response in his quest to be both scientifically and philosophically relevant. It must be noted, nevertheless that, while this response is philosophically tenable, it has no biblical support. It is a speculation that raises a number of questions, some of which I will later highlight in this evaluation.

Cloning does happen naturally in some living organisms through asexual reproduction. As it was shown in chapter 10, scientists have also proven that cloning is possible in mammals, including human beings. The process of cloning involves manipulating the oocyte in such a way that the nucleus of the oocyte is removed, and a nucleus from a mature cell is inserted (Enger & Ross 2003:394). The manipulated cell begins embryological development and can be implanted in the uterus of the female. It has been reported that in several nonhuman species such as sheep, mice, and monkeys, the process has successfully resulted in a cloned offspring that is genetically identical to the individual that donated the nucleus (Enger & Ross 2003:394).

What I need to emphasise is that the technology for cloning humans is present. The oocytes can be harvested, the nuclei can be transferred, and the techniques for introducing them into a uterus are known. Enger and Ross (2003:394) report that, in 2001 a group of researchers cloned a human embryo, that, however, stopped developing at an early stage and died. CNN.com (sa.) reports that Clonaid has made claims in 2003 that it has cloned the first boy. Clonaid's earlier claim was that it has cloned two girls. These claims may either be true or not. What is important for the purposes of this study, is that human cloning is at least a possibility. I make this statement without paying attention to the ethical issues involved in human cloning. For personal reasons, I do not endorse human cloning. However, this does not change the fact that human cloning is a possibility.

If human beings have been able to successfully clone nonhuman species as well as human beings (as claimed by Clonaid), it could be possible for God to bring about the existence of Jesus in a similar manner. I say this because I believe that God is infinitely intelligent and wise, infinitely more intelligent and wiser than any human scientist. However, as Erickson argues, Jesus would then have been Mary's clone and necessarily female. Thus, Erickson suggests that, instead of producing Jesus Christ after Mary's genetic pattern alone, God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum. As I noted earlier, this is a rare contribution to Christology, but with problems.

The author of Genesis recorded that, in creating a female human being, God performed a surgery while Adam was in a deep sleep that may be compared to unconsciousness under anaesthesia – He got a rib from Adam, which He used to fashion (Hebrew, 'to build') the woman (Nichol 1978:226). With the knowledge we have, that male human beings have one X and one Y sex chromosomes, it can be argued that the first male human being was created with these two sex chromosomes in place. Using the rib from the male human being, God 'built' a female human being with two X sex chromosomes in place. It is interesting that God did not use a sperm cell to create the first female human being. His infinite intelligence and wisdom enabled Him to create a female human being by using the rib He took from the male human being – a woman with two X sex chromosomes in place.

A question that naturally arises from the above discussion is: Was an infinitely intelligent and wise God bound by the laws of human reproductive science when it came to the incarnation? It does indeed make sense to think that God did not contradict His own laws of human reproductive science. Thus, Erickson's view that God created a human sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum could make sense. The question is: Did God really have to create a sperm to achieve His purpose in the incarnation? By the time of the incarnation, God had already long demonstrated that He was not bound by the laws of human reproductive science. In the conception of Isaac, which took place after Sarah had already reached her menopause (cf. Gen 17-18:15; 21:1-7; Rom 4:19; Heb 11:11), God demonstrated that He was above the laws of human reproductive science. At the time that Sarah conceived, it was gynecologically impossible for her to do so. The God who made Sarah conceive, is the same God who brought about the incarnation. Therefore, it is my considered argument that God was not bound by the laws of human reproductive science when it came to the incarnation. He did not have to create a sperm for the incarnation. Using His genius, He created in Mary's womb a complete male human being with one X and one Y sex chromosome. It is philosophically tenable to think that God used Mary's ovum to do that. Nevertheless, God's word is silent on this point. The angel Gabriel simply announced to Mary: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). In my view, Erickson should just have left the issue of the incarnation where the angel Gabriel left it. By trying to become scientifically and philosophically relevant, He has limited God to the laws of human reproductive science.

However, it is important to investigate Erickson's view on the incarnation. The language that the angel Gabriel used to announce the incarnation was at first common language: 'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS' (Luke 1:31). It is possible that Mary did not at first understand this statement: 'He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David' (Luke 1:32). Jesus will be called the *Son of the Highest*, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of *His father David*. In this statement the angel announced that the child to be born would have a divine Father as well as a



human father. Adam was the son of God by creation (cf. Luke 3:38; Gen 2:7; 5:1, 2). How was Jesus going to be called the Son of the Highest? How was He going to be David's Son?

Mary's concern was the manner of conception: 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?' (Luke 1:34, NIV). Going by how things had happened from the first conception recorded in human history, for Mary to conceive, a man needed to marry her and the two had to have sexual intercourse during the time of ovulation. The man whose sperm would fertilise Mary's ovum would connect Jesus to David, for He was to be the Son of David. Was Mary going to get married to Joseph before the announced conception? Following Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1, it was Joseph who should have linked Jesus to David (cf. Matt 1:1-17). From a human perspective, Mary must have expected an answer like this one: 'Joseph will marry you, and you will conceive as other women have ever conceived'. The angel Gabriel, nevertheless, announced: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Mary now understood that the child Jesus was to be a divine child and she responded: 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word' (Luke 1:38).

Interestingly, Erickson seems to be dealing with a question similar to Mary's: 'How did it happen, since Mary was a virgin?' Instead of accepting the angel Gabriel's response, Erickson speculates and argues that God created a sperm, which fertilised Mary's ovum. This is not recorded in the Bible. The angel Gabriel did not tell Mary that God was going to create a sperm to fertilise her ovum.

If God created a sperm that fertilised Mary's ovum, was it that sperm that made Jesus the Son of the Highest? Was it that sperm that also linked Him to David? If the sperm linked Jesus to God the Father, is Erickson suggesting that it could be a divine sperm? If the sperm linked Jesus to David, where did God get the material, He used to create the sperm from? Did He mysteriously get it from Joseph who was not yet Mary's husband? If God were to do this, it would be illegal and unethical. If He got the material from Mary's ovum,

it would be impossible to create a male, as Mary could only provide an X sex chromosome and not also a Y sex chromosome. These are tough philosophical questions that Erickson should answer.

Erickson's speculation that God created a sperm for the incarnation, raises another issue: What was wrong with a sperm from an existing male human being? Why did God not wait for Joseph to marry Mary before bringing about the incarnation? Would it not have been an incarnation if the normal fertilisation had taken place, as the Holy Spirit had joined the divine side of the God-Man to the human side? Interestingly, Erickson (2013:688) opines that 'it should have been possible for Jesus to have two human parents and to be fully the God-man nonetheless'. He adds: 'To insist that having a human male parent would have excluded the possibility of deity has some common elements with Apollinarianism, according to which the divine Logos took the place of one of the normal components of human nature (the soul)' (Erickson 2013:688). Thus, as I have already noted, Erickson is simply trying to be scientifically and philosophically correct.

It has been suggested that the virgin birth was indispensable to the sinlessness of Jesus (Von Campenhausen 1964:79-86). The argument seems to be that, if Jesus had possessed both that which the mother contributes and what the father ordinarily contributes, He would have had a depraved and hence sinful nature, like the rest of us. Since Mary was allowed to be part of God's plan in the incarnation, this argument suggests that transmission is related to the father. Interestingly, Erickson does not support this argument. After quoting Luke 1:35, he states: 'It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or guilt from Mary to Jesus' (Erickson 2013:689). Erickson opines that, if there had not been that special sanctifying influence, Jesus would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have. He then asks: 'Now if the Holy Spirit prevented corruption from being passed from Mary to Jesus, could He not have prevented it from being passed on by Joseph as well?' (Erickson 2013:689). In Erickson's view, the Holy Spirit could also have prevented depravity from being passed on from Joseph to Jesus. He then concludes: 'We conclude that Jesus's sinlessness was not dependent on the

virginal conception' (Erickson 2013:689). In other words, God did not create a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum because, in doing that, He would prevent the transmission of depravity, which would come from Joseph if he had supplied the sperm. This suggests then, that Erickson is, as already noted, simply trying to be scientifically and philosophically correct.

The view that God created a sperm, creates yet another question: Since Jesus had a human mother, was His human father the uncreated male whose sperm God created? Why did God have to create a sperm, when Joseph could have supplied one if He had given him an opportunity to marry Mary before the incarnation? What was wrong with Joseph's sperm?

In conclusion, it is noteworthy to state that Erickson's speculation creates more philosophical questions than answers. By suggesting that God supplied the male factor by creating a sperm specifically for the incarnation, he has gone overboard. While his view may convince some scientific and philosophical minds, it cannot convince others. As already noted, it limits God and binds Him to the rules of human reproductive science. In my view, the incarnation should just be left where the angel Gabriel left it (cf. Luke 1:35). We do not know what God did in Mary's womb. What we know is that she conceived miraculously and a complete male child, named Jesus, was born. In this light, Adams (1994:56) writes:

And the astonishing claim of the New Testament is that this very Person [God] did, in fact, enter the womb of a human mother – a part of His own creation – developed for nine months as a regular embryo would, and then emerged as a helpless, screaming baby in a Bethlehem stable. Absolutely mind-boggling!

Rodriguez (2016:22) is correct when he asserts: 'The incarnation is not about the biological laws of human conception but about the power of God working through the Spirit. God is going to perform within Mary a cosmic singularity. Inside her, the Son of God will be incarnated, becoming a human being'.

In my view, theologians should not venture into human reproductive science to explain the mystery of the incarnation. The Bible itself does not attempt to explain the mystery. The angel Gabriel's statement, if accepted by faith, is enough for our salvation. There is a place for science, but not in the mystery of the incarnation.

Erickson's views of Jesus Christ's resurrection and ascension bodies also need to be evaluated in light of what the Bible teaches. Do his views cohere with Scriptural evidence?

### **12.3.8 The Nature of Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension Bodies**

According to Erickson, Jesus' resurrection and ascension bodies were different. He differentiates the two bodies on the basis of some seeming conflicting statements in the NT. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples with the marks of the nails in His hands and the spear wound in His side (John 20:25-27). Paul argued: 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption' (1 Cor 15:50). The Bible suggests that after His resurrection Jesus could still be recognised. He said to Mary Magdalene who clung to Him: 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father' (John 20:17). The third time He showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, He took bread and fish and gave it to His disciples (John 21:13), suggesting that He had a physical resurrection body. When the disciples thought that Jesus was a spirit, He said to them: 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have' (Luke 24:39). When Jesus asked for food, 'they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence' (Luke 24:42, 43).

Erickson's challenge seems to be this: If 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God', how did Jesus who had 'flesh and bones' after His resurrection, ascend to heaven? Erickson (2013:710) has also understood the Bible to be suggesting that 'we will have no material body in heaven'. To reconcile these seeming conflicting statements, he has suggested that at His ascension, 'Jesus underwent the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of his body' (Erickson 2013:711).

In my view, Erickson has confused Jesus' pre-resurrection body with His resurrection body. Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:50 referred to our bodies before glorification. To those faithful believers who experience death, the resurrection will bring a change to their bodies (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-56). After the resurrection, they will be ready to inherit God's kingdom. They do not have to experience a further metamorphosis. Erickson (2013:710), however, suggests that, while at the time of our resurrection our bodies will be transformed in one step, Jesus' transformation occurred in two events – the resurrection and ascension. He opines that 'the body he [Jesus] had at the resurrection was yet to undergo a more complete transformation at the point of the ascension' (Erickson 2013:710). In his view, Christ's body became 'a spiritual body' at the ascension (cf. 1 Cor 15:44).

As I have already noted, 1 Corinthians 15:50 refers to a human's body before the resurrection, which I believe was the same body that Jesus had before His resurrection. This assertion has support elsewhere in the NT: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He [Jesus] Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, the devil' (Heb 2:14). Jesus became a mortal human being in order to experience death. The 'flesh and blood' that He partook of, 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God'. It should be noted that 'flesh and blood' and 'corruption' belong to the same category. That is why 'this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality' (1 Cor 15:53).

It is my contention, therefore, that Jesus Christ did not undergo any further change to His body after His resurrection. He went to heaven with His resurrection body, which had been immortalised. For purposes of the plan of salvation, God has preserved the marks of the crucifixion on Jesus' body. It is this aspect of Jesus' resurrection body, which Erickson has failed to reconcile with 1 Corinthians 15:50. Glorification that took place to Jesus' body through the resurrection, preserved the marks of the nails and the spear. Otherwise, Jesus' resurrection body was probably like the body that Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin. This is the body we will have at Jesus' second coming: 'Behold, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we

know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is' (1 John 3:2).

It has been opined by Erickson that Jesus now bears a perfected humanity. This statement needs to be evaluated in light of what Scripture teaches and other claims that Erickson has made.

### **12.3.9 A Perfected Humanity**

Paul stated: 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim 2:5). After quoting this text, Erickson (2013:711) suggests: 'This gives every indication that Jesus currently is a human who mediates between God and us'. He opines:

His, however, is not the type of humanity we have, or even the humanity that he had while he was here. It is a perfected humanity of the type we will have after our resurrection. Thus, his continuing incarnation imposes no limitation on his deity. Just as our bodies will have their limitations removed, so it has been with the perfect, glorified humanity of Jesus, which continues to be united with the deity, and thus will forever exceed what we will ultimately be (Erickson 2013:711).

Erickson is correct when he states that Jesus' current humanity is not the type of humanity we have. However, He is not completely correct when he opines that Jesus' humanity is not the type of humanity that He had while he was here. Our current humanity is that which cannot inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 15:50). This, in my view, except for the aspect of sinning, is the type of humanity that Jesus had before His resurrection. The humanity He now has in heaven is His resurrection humanity. Indeed, in heaven, Jesus entered into the glory He had prayed for before His death on Calvary's cross (cf. John 17:5, 24). When John saw Him in vision, he described Him this way: 'Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down

to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were like white wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength' (Rev 1:12-16). Jesus therefore bears a glorified body.

The picture that the Bible presents is that of a material or physical, but glorified body. It contrasts with Erickson's picture of an immaterial body (Erickson 2013:720). Before Adam and Eve sinned, they had material or physical bodies. My opinion is that the Holy Spirit inhabited that body. They could stand in God's presence without any problem. Their bodies were not in the state in which it could be said of them that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption' (1 Cor 15:50).

A question that needs to be asked, is: Did Jesus need to have His humanity perfected? In what sense was it perfected? Erickson (2013:657-658) opines: 'Our humanity is not the standard by which we are to measure his [Jesus]'. His humanity, true and unadulterated, is the standard by which we are to be measured'. The context of this statement is the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Erickson is thus correct when he suggests that Jesus' humanity is the standard by which we are to be measured, for He did not commit any sin. The question that still needs to be answered is: If Jesus' humanity is the standard by which we are to be measured, why did He have to have His humanity perfected, as Erickson suggests?

Erickson (2013:657) asserts that 'the type of human nature that each of us possesses is not pure human nature'. This is because of the fact that the 'true humanity created by God in our case has been corrupted and spoiled' (Erickson 2013:657). In this world there 'have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall), and Jesus' (Erickson 2013:657). If Jesus was pure in His human nature, why is His current humanity not that which He had while He was here? Why did His humanity have to be perfected?

As I have been studying Erickson's Christology, I have noticed that he does not clearly distinguish Jesus' physical nature from His spiritual nature. The distinction is there in his system, but it is very difficult to spot. He therefore makes statements that seem to be conflicting. In one sense He asserts that 'Jesus' humanity was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall' (Erickson 2013:671), and 'His was, spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified' (Erickson 2013:671). If this were the case, why did Jesus have to have His humanity perfected and glorified? Why, as Erickson suggests, is Jesus' current humanity not the humanity that He had while He was on earth? What is Erickson's opinion on this?

It would appear that, when Erickson discusses the aspect of Jesus' humanity being perfected and glorified, he refers to His physical nature, for he suggests: 'Just as our bodies will have their limitations removed, so it has been with the perfect, glorified humanity of Jesus, which continues to be united with the deity, and thus will forever exceed what we will ultimately be' (Erickson 2013:711). Erickson (2013:705) asserts: 'Jesus was capable of feeling fatigue and weariness, pain and suffering, hunger, even the anguish of betrayal, denial, and abandonment by those closest to him. He experienced the disappointment, discouragement, and distress of soul that go with being fully human. His humanity was complete'. These are things related to Jesus' physical nature, which are common to all of us. In Erickson's view, these physical limitations were removed at Jesus' resurrection.

What do I think of Erickson's seeming conflicting statements on Jesus' incarnational and resurrection humanities? According to Erickson, Jesus' spiritual nature was like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. However, His physical nature was like our current physical nature. Since Jesus' physical nature was like our current physical nature, it had to be perfected and glorified. However, in my view, Jesus needed to have the tendency to sin removed from His humanity. Jesus was the standard humanity in as far as His performance was concerned. The law of sin that resided in His human nature suggested that something needed to happen to it in order for Him to be that kind of humanity that



God created in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, Jesus' spiritual nature needed to be perfected and glorified in the sense of removing the tendency to sin that He inherited from Mary. Erickson does not address this aspect of Christology. However, he has at least observed that Jesus' physical nature needed to be perfected and glorified. This is in conflict with the view of other pre-fall Christologists who could find no biblical support for the perfection and glorification of Jesus' physical humanity.

I will close this discussion of problematic areas in Erickson's Christology by considering the view that Jesus' humanity continues to be united with the deity. This is a continuation of the foregoing discussion.

#### **12.3.10 A Humanity that Continues to be United with the Deity**

Erickson (2013:711) makes this statement: 'Just as our bodies will have their limitations removed, so it has been with the perfect, glorified humanity of Jesus, which continues to be united with the deity, and thus will forever exceed what we will ultimately be'. It is difficult to figure out what Erickson implies when he asserts that the perfect, glorified humanity of Jesus continues to be united with the deity and thus will forever exceed what we will ultimately be. As already noted, it is true that Jesus' body had its limitations removed. All the physical weaknesses were removed from His body. In my view, the tendency to sin was removed from Jesus' human nature. This means that Jesus' human nature is no longer the sinful human nature that He assumed. His human nature is in perfect harmony with His divine nature. He no longer has to struggle with a nature that leans toward sin.

In my opinion, Erickson's statement suggests that the union of the perfect and glorified humanity of Jesus with the deity took place when it got perfected and glorified, and now continues to be united with the deity and thus will exceed what we will ultimately be. If this is the case, I need to ask: In what sense does Jesus' humanity continue to be united with the deity? It would appear, in Erickson's view, that Jesus' humanity will forever exceed what we will ultimately be, because of His continued union with the deity. However, is this view supported by Scripture? Is it not just the glory of His body that will ultimately exceed

the glory of our bodies? In terms of perfection, Jesus Christ is absolute, He is absolutely perfect, while we will keep growing in perfection. While here on earth, Jesus Christ's perfection was absolute, while ours was not. In heaven, Jesus' perfection is not any different from what it was here on earth.

What seems to be a clear biblical teaching, is that Jesus Christ is the God-Man, for He is the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. While He was on earth, He did not live as God, but as a human being. The incarnation required from Jesus not to use His divine attributes as He had done before He became human. He had to do everything as a human being, fully dependent on the Father and the Holy Spirit. As the God-Man, Jesus was already a being different from us – only His human nature was like ours. It should be noted that the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ was a perfect union. However, since in my view, the human nature He assumed was the very fallen human nature that He found, it can be argued that, when it got perfected and glorified, the tendency toward sin was removed. Jesus Christ's human nature no longer tries to pull Him away from the divine will. In my view, the perfection and glorification that took place at Jesus Christ's resurrection was not a process that would have to continue throughout eternity. Just there and then the tendency to sin in Jesus Christ's human nature was removed.

Since Erickson does not believe that Jesus' human nature was the very fallen human nature that He found when He came to earth, it is difficult to tell what he implies when he states that the perfect and glorified humanity of Jesus continues to be united with the deity. It can probably only be understood in the context of his earlier assertion that 'at some point, Jesus' ascension was not merely a physical and spatial change, but spiritual as well. At that time Jesus underwent the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of his body' (Erickson 2013:711). However, I have already observed that, at His ascension, Jesus did not undergo any metamorphosis. His ascension was not a spiritual ascension, but merely a physical and spatial change. His body had already become a spiritual body by the action of the resurrection, which immortalised it and removed the tendency to sin from it. In other words, I am of the view that a spiritual body is simply the resurrection body, or a body from which the tendency to sin has been

removed – it is a body that has been immortalised, perfected, and glorified. It is definitely not a body without flesh and bones. Before Adam and Eve fell into sin, they had flesh and bones. This is confirmed by Adam's own words: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man' (Gen 2:23).

At Jesus Christ's ascension, angels spoke in a manner that suggested that His ascension was not anything other than merely a physical and spatial change. The angels stated: 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11). The Jesus who went up into heaven had flesh and bones (cf. Luke 24:39); we can expect a Jesus who is coming back to also have flesh and bones. John related: 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is' (1 John 3:2). Paul has put it this way: 'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things by Himself' (Phil 3:20-21). Our lowly body will conform to His glorious body: It can be argued that our humanity will not be different from that of Jesus Christ. However, it is also correct to suggest that Jesus Christ's body will be more glorious than ours. What must be understood, nevertheless, is that He was glorified with the same glory He had with the Father before the foundation of this world (John 17:5, 24). This was not as a result of a further metamorphosis to His humanity, which supposedly took place at His ascension. He simply entered into that glory when He ascended to heaven.

It is important to mention that the term 'flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39) is not synonymous with 'flesh and blood' (1 Cor 15:50; cf. Heb 2:14). In my view, the phrase, 'flesh and bones' refers to the physical aspect of our being. This was not incompatible with God's kingdom when Adam and Eve were created. The 'flesh and bones' of Jesus Christ at the resurrection was not incompatible with the kingdom of God. Therefore, contrary to Erickson's view, Jesus Christ did not have to undergo a further metamorphosis at His ascension. However,

'flesh and blood' (1 Cor 1:50) is incompatible with the kingdom of God, as it refers to this corruptible, mortal life. There is, therefore, a need for it to undergo a change.

It is difficult to determine what Erickson implies when he states that Jesus' humanity continues to be united with the deity and will exceed what we will ultimately become. I must assert that, from the time of the incarnation to eternity, Jesus Christ will always be the God-Man. The union of the divine and human in Him happened once and for all. Jesus Christ's humanity will for endless ages remain united with His divinity. If this is what Erickson implies, then he is correct, but I doubt if it is this unity that makes Jesus' humanity exceed what we will ultimately be. In my view, the absolute perfection of His humanity is what makes it exceed what we will ultimately be. As God, He was and will always be infinitely better than us.

When the incarnation took place, the second Person of the Godhead got physically separated from the Father, but spiritually He was always with the Father. At the cross, an eternal separation took place between the Father and the Son. The resurrection removed the separation. The ascension took away the physical separation. The Father and the Son have since the ascension lived together again. If this is what Erickson implies, then he is correct. I must emphasise that, except at the cross, the Father and the Son never experienced any spiritual separation. It was only at the cross that the Father withdrew His presence from His Son. Therefore, it is not theologically correct to suggest that, at His ascension, Jesus Christ's humanity underwent a spiritual change which made Him continue to be united with the deity and will exceed what we will ultimately be.

I will now turn to a discussion of the undergirding philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced Erickson's pre-fall view of Jesus Christ's human nature.

#### **12.4 Undergirding Philosophical Categories and Thought Patterns**

There were undergirding philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced Erickson to formulate his pre-fall view of Jesus Christ's humanity, including his view that God created a sperm for the incarnation. The ones easy to decipher from his works

include: God created human beings in His image to facilitate the incarnation; fallen human beings inherit depravity and guilt from parents; all human beings are born in need of salvation; the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit suggests a sinless nature; and the Y sex chromosome is contributed by the male parent.

#### **12.4.1 Human Beings were Created in God's Image to Facilitate the Incarnation**

Erickson (2013:672) speculates that probably one reason why human beings were created in God's image was to facilitate the incarnation, which God knew was going to take place someday. Knowing that He was going to incarnate, God created a humanity that was compatible with His nature. The fallen human nature, however, was incompatible with God's nature. Fallen human beings are not true human beings, but impaired, broken-down vestiges of essential humanity and this humanity cannot be united with the deity (Erickson 2013:671). Therefore, Jesus Christ did not assume the post-fall, but the pre-fall nature of humanity. It could thus be argued that, before Erickson has decided on what type of human nature Jesus Christ had to assume, He thought about the issue of compatibility of the divine and human natures. It is clear from this thought pattern that the post-fall view of Jesus Christ's human nature cannot be considered by Erickson. In order to convince those who reject the idea of the incarnation, based on the seeming incompatibility of the infinite deity and finite humanity, Erickson had to formulate a model that is easier to accept.

The reasoning seems to be: If people already reject the incarnation on the basis of the seeming incompatibility of the infinite deity and finite humanity, how will they accept the view that Jesus Christ assumed the post-fall nature of humanity? Erickson (2013:671) asserts:

Jesus' humanity was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall. He was not merely as human as we are; he was more human than we are. His was, spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified. His humanity was certainly more compatible with deity than is the type of humanity that we now

observe. We should define humanity, not by integrating our present empirical observations, but by examining the human nature of Jesus, for he most fully reveals the true nature of humanity.

This thought pattern has at least two problems. First, the incarnation is not so much discussed as a means to an end, but an end in itself. The concern is more on preserving the purity of Jesus Christ than on the purpose for the incarnation, which is the salvation of the fallen humanity. Second, this pattern negates the concept of a God who dwells among His fallen, sinful people. God is here portrayed as one who is too holy to dwell with fallen human beings, and yet the very name 'Immanuel' can be translated with 'God with us' (Matt 1:23). God came to dwell among His people in human flesh although, in the incarnation, he did not become sinful, but He assumed a sinful human nature. The sinful nature that God assumed did not defile Him, instead He made it obey perfectly. When Jesus touched a leper (Matt 8:3), leprosy did not contaminate Him; instead the leper got cleansed. This illustrates the fact that the fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus Christ assumed did not contaminate Him – He cleansed it instead. Erickson's pre-fall view fails to proclaim this gospel fact.

#### **12.4.2 Fallen Human Beings Inherit Depravity and Guilt from Parents**

The second thought pattern that must have influenced Erickson's pre-fall model was the view that human beings inherit depravity and guilt from their parents. Erickson reasons that, if Jesus Christ had assumed the post-fall nature of humanity, He would have inherited depravity and guilt. Erickson is correct when he asserts that fallen human beings inherit depravity from their parents. Nevertheless, he is wrong when he suggests that fallen human beings inherit guilt. The teaching of the Bible is that guilt is not inheritable. Fallen human beings are not guilty of Adam and Eve's actual sin, but they inherited depravity. In other words, they are born with a depraved human nature. In my view, Jesus Christ assumed a depraved human nature, but He did not thereby get depraved. The NT clearly teaches that He was always under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Apart from that, He was the God-Man. His humanity did not exist independent of His divine nature. He

was truly God and truly human. In His performance, He did not commit any sin. He did not inherit guilt, for as I have already noted, guilt is not inheritable.

Erickson fails to understand how Jesus Christ could assume a fallen, sinful human nature and yet remained undefiled. Therefore, He formulates a model of Jesus Christ's human nature that, in his view, preserves the purity of that nature. His pre-fall model is also formulated on a wrong concept of guilt in relation to parents and their children. Related to the concepts of depravity and guilt is the idea that all human beings are born sinners in need of salvation.

#### **12.4.3 Fallen Human Beings are Born in Need of Salvation**

This is a historical thought pattern that influenced the original formulators of the pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's humanity. It can be formulated as follows: All human beings are born sinners in need of salvation, therefore Jesus Christ did not assume a fallen, sinful human nature, for if He had assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of salvation. This thought pattern is implied in Erickson's Christological views.

However, it is possible to hold the post-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature without implying that He was a sinner in need of salvation. He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature in order to qualify to be our substitute. He became that which He was not by native right. Apart from that, He was the God-Man. Thus, the fallen, sinful human nature He assumed did not turn Him into a sinner in need of salvation.

#### **12.4.4 The Sanctifying Power of the Holy Spirit Suggests a Sinless Human Nature**

Another thought pattern that seems to have influenced Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's humanity was the sanctifying role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation. As I have already noted, in Erickson's view, the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation was to prevent a transmission of depravity and guilt from Mary to Jesus. Therefore, the thought pattern is as follows: Since the Holy Spirit prevented a transmission of depravity and guilt

from Mary to Jesus, He was born with a sinless human nature. Only a pre-fall humanity had a sinless nature. Therefore, Jesus Christ assumed the pre-fall human nature.

Erickson finds support for this line of thought in God's word itself. The Bible relates: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). The thought pattern seems to be like this: Since Jesus is called the Holy One, in order for Him to be conceived by Mary who had a depraved nature, but also be holy, the Holy Spirit must have prevented a transmission of depravity from Mary to Him.

It must be noted, however, that there is an alternative view of the meaning of the phrase 'that Holy One'. A human being can be holy in a nature that has a tendency toward sin. If the Holy Spirit can dwell in human beings who have received the new-birth experience, but whose human nature still leans toward sin (cf. 1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19), then those human beings are holy. God's word suggests that it is possible for people with fallen, sinful human natures to be holy (cf. 1 Pet 1:15). If fallen, sinful human beings who have received the new-birth experience can be holy, it was possible for Jesus to be holy even if He inherited a fallen, sinful human nature from Mary. It can be argued, therefore, that the phrase 'that Holy One', in Luke 1:35, does not necessarily imply that Jesus Christ assumed a sinless human nature like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. It is possible to also argue that Jesus was the Holy One because He was the God-Man. He was the union of a divine nature, which is holy, and a fallen, sinful human nature. The holy sanctified the unholy.

How did God create a complete male human being in the Person of Jesus Christ when only one human parent was involved? In his quest to be scientifically and philosophically correct, Erickson ventures into the science of human reproduction, genetics, and cloning.

#### **12.4.5 The Y Sex Chromosome is Contributed by a Male Parent**

Genetic scientists have discovered that, for a person to be born male, a male parent must have contributed a Y sex chromosome during fertilisation of the ovum. Jesus Christ was



born a male human being, but there was no male human parent involved. If God had produced Jesus after Mary's genetic pattern alone, He would have been her clone, and necessarily female. Where then did the Y sex chromosome come from? After reasoning this way, Erickson concludes that God created a sperm specifically for the incarnation.

While this is a viable explanation, I have already noted that God did not necessarily have to create a sperm for the incarnation. This speculative hypothesis binds God to the laws of reproductive science and hence puts Him in the category of finite beings. The word of God does not tell us what happened in Mary's womb at the incarnation. It is enough to state that 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). In fact, Erickson (2013:710) himself suggests that 'the virgin birth should not be thought of as essentially a biological matter'. He therefore contradicts himself when He insists that God created a human sperm for the incarnation. God is infinitely too intelligent and wise to be bound by the laws of reproductive science.

What follows, are my personal observations on Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature.

## **12.5 Personal Observations on the Pre-fall Model of Erickson**

As I did when I was evaluating Sequeira's model, my personal observations on Erickson's pre-fall model will be based on how the model stands when tested against the standard norm of Scripture.

### **12.5.1 Testing Erickson's Model against Scripture**

In my view, Erickson's model of Jesus' humanity fails the test of the standard norm – the Bible. Since he is concerned with the preservation of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, he fails to take into consideration the fact that the nature of sin determined the human nature that Jesus was to assume in the incarnation. Apart from Luke 1:35, which seemingly suggests that Jesus assumed an inherently sinless human nature, the entire NT teaches that Jesus fully identified Himself with the fallen humanity, except in sinning. His divine

nature was sinless, whereas His human nature was the very one that the people had, whom He came to save – it had the tendency or leaning toward sin, which He managed to control by relying on the power from His Father. Erickson fails to see this in the NT.

In formulating his model of Jesus' human nature, Erickson does not take the full context of the incarnation into consideration, which includes both the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity. This is the reason why, in my opinion, he fails to formulate a model of Jesus' humanity that can adequately deal with the dual problem of sin. Erickson's Jesus did not qualify to be our substitute because He assumed the spiritual nature of a pre-fallen Adam and Eve. He cannot be our example in overcoming temptation and in suffering, because He assumed a human nature that was different from ours. He could therefore not be our High Priest, because He did not become one of us.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus had two natures – the divine and the human. Erickson's Jesus had three natures – the divine nature, the pre-fall spiritual nature, and the post-fall physical nature. This, in my view, contradicts the teaching of the standard norm – the word of God.

## **12.6 Conclusion**

In the conclusion I will focus on the reason for the incarnation and how Erickson's model of Jesus Christ's human nature addresses the dual problem of sin.

The dual problem of sin necessitated the incarnation. Therefore, an adequate model of the incarnation should satisfactorily address this dual problem of sin. It was not enough for Jesus to simply substitute His sinless human nature for our sinful nature and bear our sins on Calvary's cross. Sin (as nature) had to be dealt with in the flesh. It was for this reason that Paul wrote: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3). In my view, God condemned sin (as nature) in the flesh of His Son, Jesus Christ, because at the incarnation, Jesus assumed the fallen, sinful human nature. He had to first demonstrate in the fallen, sinful human nature that

He assumed, that God's law could be kept. Then, He had to die a substitutionary death on Calvary's cross. The fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed was impaled on Calvary's cross – sin as nature was thus dealt a death blow. Through the resurrection, the tendency to sin, which Jesus had inherited from Mary, was removed. He ascended to heaven with a perfected and glorified human nature. It is this perfected and glorified human nature that we will receive at Jesus Christ's second coming. In the meantime, we will, by faith, identify ourselves with the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as we, by faith, live in harmony with God's revealed will for our lives.

Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature fails to adequately deal with the dual problem of sin. It is because he begins with Jesus as a Person, instead of first beginning with the dual problem of sin, which necessitated the incarnation before deciding what kind of human nature Jesus had to assume, that he fails to formulate a model that would address the dual problem of sin. His preoccupation with the preservation of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ compels him to suggest that the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin (a tendency toward wrongdoing) from Mary to Jesus. Through sin, Adam failed to remain the standard person that God had originally created. Therefore, Jesus Christ was incarnated as the standard person. With this reasoning, Erickson fails to appreciate the fact that the incarnation was not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

I appreciate Erickson's assertion that Jesus Christ was the standard humanity. It is true that the infinite deity and finite humanity perfectly united in Jesus Christ, who most perfectly revealed God. In my opinion, however, it was in the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed that Jesus most perfectly revealed God. Jesus was, before the resurrection, the standard humanity in performance and not in human nature. It was only after the resurrection when His human nature was perfected and glorified that He became the standard humanity as God intended it to be when He created it. At Jesus Christ's second coming, our human nature will be perfected and glorified, because it was already perfected and glorified in Jesus Christ.

It was the fallen, sinful finite humanity that perfectly united with the holy infinite deity in the incarnation. This was because Jesus Christ came to reconcile the alienated humanity with God. The pre-fall humanity was not in an alienated state; it was the post-fall humanity that needed to be reconciled with God. This reconciliation had to begin right at the incarnation. Therefore, Jesus Christ did not assume a pre-fall humanity. Erickson fails to see that, by assuming a pre-fall humanity, Jesus Christ would reconcile a humanity with the Holy Trinity that was not alienated in the first place. In my view, Erickson's pre-fall view must be rejected, because it inadequately addresses the dual problem of sin, which was the reason for the incarnation.

While Sequeira believes that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature, and Erickson believes that Jesus Christ assumed the spiritual nature of a pre-fall humanity and the physical nature of a post-fall humanity, Gulley believes that Jesus Christ assumed neither a pre-fall nor a post-fall human nature. I will, in what follows, evaluate Gulley's alternative or unique Christology. In doing this, I will follow the same format when evaluating Sequeira's and Erickson's models.

**CHAPTER 13**  
**CRITICAL EVALUATION:**  
**THE ALTERNATIVE OR UNIQUE OR ‘NEITHER PRE-FALL NOR**  
**POST-FALL’ CHRISTOLOGY AS TAUGHT BY NORMAN R. GULLEY**

**13.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter I evaluated Erickson’s model of Jesus’ humanity. I suggested that his model should be rejected, because it does not adequately solve the problem of sin. In trying to exempt Jesus from sin as a tendency, which all human beings are born with, Erickson fails to provide a model of Jesus’ humanity that satisfactorily resolves the sin problem. In this chapter, I am going to evaluate Gulley’s model of Jesus’ humanity.

Like the other two Christologists whose Christological views I have evaluated, Gulley has made some significant contributions to Christology that need to be mentioned in this study. For this reason, I will recognise and discuss the contributions that Gulley has made to Christology. There are also some problematic areas in his Christology, which I will discuss. I will then consider the philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced Gulley’s formulation of his alternative or ‘neither pre-fall nor post-fall (unique) Christology’, after which I will test his Christological model against the standard norm of the Bible. Finally, I will make personal observations on the whole scheme of Gulley’s model of Jesus’ human nature in relation to the Christological view contained in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005) and *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Dederen 2000).

**13.2 Contributions to Christology**

Some of Gulley’s contributions to Christology include his own system, his own linguistic and theological study, his preservation of the uniqueness of Jesus, and his emphasis on the mission that determined Jesus’ humanity. I will discuss each of these contributions.

### **13.2.1 His Own System**

There are not many systematic theologians who compose their own systems, especially in the SDA Church. Thus, Gulley has distinguished himself by doing this. His system has made it easier for me to follow his view of Jesus Christ's human nature in a systematic way. It is a mine of knowledge that I would recommend to both systematic and other theologians. Gulley also did his own linguistic and theological study, which was indispensable in his study of the nature of Jesus Christ's humanity.

### **13.2.2 His Own Linguistic and Theological Study**

Generally, systematic theologians depend on the exegetical tools prepared by other theologians in their systematisation of doctrines. However, Gulley distinguished himself by doing his own linguistic and theological study to define the possible meanings of Greek terms like σάρξ, ἁμαρτία, ἴσος, ὁμοίωμα, μονογενής, and πρωτότοκος, and the significance of expressions like 'the seed of Abraham' (Heb 2:16) and 'the seed of David' (Rom 1:3). His main premise, based on his study, was this: 'Throughout the investigation we will document the overwhelming evidence that Jesus did in fact take a sinless human nature at birth (spiritually) while possessing a similar physical nature to others of His day' (*Ministry*, 1985; cf. Zurcher 1999:223).

This study seemingly gave Gulley confidence as he formulated his view of Jesus Christ's humanity, which he definitely improved upon in his 2012 system. It can initially be stated that his linguistic and theological study is a contribution to theology, and Christology in particular. In his Christology, he preserves the uniqueness of Jesus Christ's human nature, which some Christologists fail to do.

### **13.2.3 His Preservation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ's Human Nature**

The strict pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature would put Jesus on the same spiritual and physical level as the pre-fall Adam. However, in his Christology, Gulley preserves the uniqueness of Jesus Christ by suggesting that His human nature was neither that of a pre-fall Adam nor that of a post-fall Adam. He asserts that spiritually, Jesus Christ assumed the nature of the pre-fall Adam, while physically He assumed the

nature of the post-fall Adam. In other words, Jesus Christ had both the elements of pre-fall and post-fall humanity in Himself. This, in my view, is a contribution to Christology that other pre-fall Christologists have failed to make.

#### **13.2.4 His Emphasis on the Mission that Determined Jesus Christ's Human Nature**

Apart from the contributions discussed above, Gulley emphasises Jesus' mission as something that determined His human nature. There would have been no incarnation if Adam and Eve had not fallen into sin. Thus, it was specifically to deal with the problem of sin that the second Person of the Godhead assumed a human nature. Gulley suggests that, in our discussion of Jesus Christ's human nature, we must never forget that the second Person of the Godhead was incarnated with this mission in mind. Jesus Christ came to deal with the sin problem, however, not to become part of it. He came to reconcile the alienated humanity to God, taking care that He Himself did not become alienated in the process.

Gulley's emphasis on the mission of Jesus Christ that determined His human nature, challenges other Christologists, especially those who promote the postlapsarian view, to be cautious in the way they discuss Jesus Christ's human nature. This is because some post-fall Christologists postulate that Jesus Christ was at the same plane with the rest of humanity. While I do not support some of Gulley's Christological views, I commend him for reminding all Christologists that the incarnation happened due to the mission that Jesus had.

While appreciating Gulley's contributions to Christology, I should mention that there are a number of problematic areas in his Christology, which need clarification. I will now highlight and discuss these problematic areas.

### **13.3 Problematic Areas in Gulley's Christology**

As I have already noted, there are some problematic areas in Gulley's Christology, which militate against his model. In my view, some of Gulley's views in relation to his alternative or unique model of Jesus Christ's human nature cannot pass the test of Scripture.

### **13.3.1 Jesus Christ's Human Nature was Spiritually like that of Pre-fall Adam**

In both his *Christ Our Substitute* (Gulley 1982) and *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III (Gulley 2012), Gulley takes the position that Jesus Christ's human nature was spiritually like that of the pre-fall Adam. In other words, He assumed a spiritual human nature, which did not have a tendency toward sin that all the descendants of Adam are born with. In his view, if Jesus Christ had assumed a human nature with a tendency toward sin, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of a saviour. This is because all human beings are born sinners in need of salvation.

Apart from Luke 1:35, which is the angel Gabriel's announcement of the incarnation, and other texts that confirm that Jesus Christ was without sin (cf. e.g. John 8:46; 1 Cor 5:21; Heb 7:26; 1 John 3:5), Gulley does not have much support for his model of Jesus Christ's human nature. When evaluating Erickson's model, I noted that the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation was to bring about the incarnation itself. The Holy Spirit's role in the incarnation was not to prevent the transmission of SIN (a tendency) from Mary to Jesus. Gulley suggests that the phrase 'that Holy One' (Luke 1:35) is an indication that Jesus Christ was conceived without sin in nature. My argument is that there is no hint in Gabriel's statement that this was the case. Gabriel was simply responding to Mary's question: 'How can it be, since I do not have a man?' (Luke 1:35). Mary's question was about the nature of conception. Therefore, the angel Gabriel's response was specifically about the nature of conception. The Holy Spirit would bring about the conception, and since the conception was going to be without the involvement of a male, 'that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God'. He would become the Son of God through the incarnation.

The phrase 'that Holy One' needs to be discussed here. Only baby Jesus was ever called 'that Holy One'. Could this suggest that He was born without sin in a human nature? In my view, it does not suggest that Jesus Christ was born without sin in a human nature. He was holy in the sense that He was a union of two natures: A holy divine nature and a fallen, sinful nature. He was a human being with a fallen, sinful human nature, but who never committed sin. He was holy in the sense that, right from His mother's womb, He was filled with the Holy Spirit. In His life after He was born, He remained holy till His death



on Calvary's cross. However, this was holiness in a human nature, which had a tendency toward sin. Jesus did not let the tendency toward sin get cultivated into actual sin by succumbing to temptation.

As I noted when evaluating Erickson's Christology, some of the texts that state Jesus Christ's sinlessness, actually refer to His performance. The other texts refer to His divine nature. There are no texts in the NT that suggest that Jesus Christ's human nature was inherently without sin. It was His character that was faultless. In the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed, He did not commit sin.

Gulley's argument that Jesus Christ assumed a pre-fall human nature on a spiritual level, raises the question of how God achieved this in the womb of a woman who herself had a fallen, sinful human nature. Fact is that nothing is impossible for God. However, it seems unlikely that God would prevent the transmission of SIN from Mary to Jesus. This is because the very reason why God brought about the incarnation was for the second Person of the Godhead to assume a fallen humanity. I understand when Gulley postulates that Jesus Christ only needed to assume a human nature and not necessarily a fallen, sinful human nature. Even though this makes sense, it should be mentioned that, if God intended that Jesus Christ should not assume a fallen, sinful human nature, He would also have prevented the inheritance of a fallen physical nature, which Gulley accepts that Jesus Christ has assumed.

In my view, the incarnation took place after sin entered the world, because the Triune God planned that the second Person of the Godhead should assume the very fallen, sinful human nature that we all have inherited from our parents. This was because the Triune God planned that He was going to deal with the dual problem of sin by condemning sin as nature in Jesus Christ's human flesh and laying our sins on Him so that He might bear them on Calvary's cross.

A contrary view is that, if God desired that the second Person should assume humanity after it has deteriorated for many generations, in order for Him to take care of sin in totality,

He would have implemented His plan after the last person was born (Gulley 1982:52-53). This, however, is an argument that fails to take into consideration the fact that sin as nature (a leaning or tendency) was the same for the fallen Adam and his descendants. It does not matter at what time of human history a person is born. One simply has to be Adam's descendant. It is the physical aspect of our nature that has been degenerating from the time that Adam and Eve fell into sin. However, our physical nature is not our real problem – it is our spiritually fallen, sinful human nature that is our real problem. It was indeed easier for Adam and Eve to obey God in a nature that was both spiritually and physically unfallen than it is for us who are spiritually and physically fallen. Nevertheless, our major challenge is our spiritually fallen, sinful human nature. If Jesus was exempted from the tendency to sin, which is our lot, then He had an easier battle with temptation than we have. This is because, in my view, it was easier for Adam in his sinless flesh to overcome temptation. If Jesus Christ assumed a sinless human nature, His situation with temptation was just like that of Adam in a sinless human nature.

The argument that it was more difficult for Jesus Christ to overcome temptation because of His inherent divinity, which He could have easily appealed to, only makes sense in the context of the post-fall model of His human nature. The struggle with the tendency to sin would have been a temptation to appeal to His inherent divinity, independently of His Father. In our struggle with sin as nature, the temptation is to let go of our acquired divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), which includes a trust in divine power, and get back to our evil ways, which include trusting ourselves instead of trusting God's power. Indeed, we do not have anything to depend on, except our miserable self in as far as our spiritual life is concerned. We are spiritually wretched (Rom 7:24) and miserable (Rev 3:17). Jesus, however, was, from the outset of His life, spiritually rich, for He was always filled with the Holy Spirit. Apart from that, He had inherent riches of His own divinity, which He could have easily appealed to, but in a human nature, which was sinless like that of the pre-fall Adam, He really would not have to be tempted to appeal to His inherent divinity. This is because He was in a human nature, which was already inclined to do God's will.

If it is true that in a nature, which was inherently sinless, Jesus struggled with temptation more than born-again Christians do in their fallen, sinful natures, then we must conclude that Adam struggled with temptation in his sinless nature more than born-again Christians do in their fallen, sinful human natures. The truth, however, is that it was easier for Adam to overcome temptation in his sinless human nature than it is for born-again Christians to overcome temptation in their fallen, sinful natures. In his sinless nature, Adam was more inclined to do what God wanted him to do than to do what he wanted to do. In their fallen, sinful human nature, born-again Christians are more inclined to fulfil their own desires than to fulfil God's will. Thus, Adam's sin in a sinless nature was inexcusable. It follows therefore that it was in the fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus had assumed, that He struggled with temptation more than born-again Christians will ever struggle with it. It is only in this context that Jesus' struggle with temptation in Gethsemane makes sense (cf. Matt 26:36-46). The author of the letter to the Hebrews specified that 'in the days of His flesh...He...offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and prayers and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered' (Heb 5:7-8). This only makes sense in the context of a post-fall model of Jesus' human nature.

While it is true that every person who is born in this world is a sinner in need of a saviour, Jesus Christ did not become a sinner by assuming a fallen, sinful human nature, because He became what He had not been by native right. We are fallen, sinful human beings, and nothing else. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was God who assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. He assumed that fallen, sinful human nature in order to destroy sin. This is something that none of us could do and will ever be able to do, since our only existence is that of human beings. Worse still, our only existence is that of *fallen, sinful* human beings.

Based on the weaknesses that I have highlighted, I propose that Gulley's alternative model of Jesus Christ's human nature should be rejected. It lacks biblical support and is more difficult to defend than the post-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature.

Another problematic area in Gulley's pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature deals with how God restored His relationship with the fallen, sinful humanity through Jesus Christ.

### **13.3.2 Restoration of Relationship through Jesus Christ's Sinless Nature**

Gulley (2012:442) makes this statement: 'Just as the first Adam broke the relationship with God, the second Adam restored the relationship with God and humans within His own incarnational nature. He united God and humans within Himself'. As it stands, this statement is absolutely correct. Jesus did indeed restore the relationship between God and humans within His own incarnational nature. Nevertheless, I need to ask Gulley: What type of humans did Jesus unite with God within Himself? I want to believe that the reason for Jesus to unite God and humans within Himself, was because humans had alienated themselves from God. Therefore, in order to restore the relationship that had earlier existed between God and humans, Jesus had to unite God and humans within Himself. Since the humans whose relationship with God needed to be restored, were fallen, sinful human beings, it follows that Jesus united God and the fallen, sinful humans within Himself. Thus, by suggesting that, on the spiritual level, Jesus Christ assumed a pre-fall human nature, Gulley contradicts himself. The fallen humankind's problem is on a spiritual level. The fallen humankind was alienated from God. Therefore, it can only make sense to argue that Jesus united God with alienated humans within Himself. This would imply that He has assumed an alienated humanity in order to restore the relationship between God and humans within His own incarnational nature.

It does not make sense to state that Jesus united God with spiritually unfallen humans because, in the first place, these unfallen humans did not need to be united with God. Before Adam and Eve sinned, they lived in harmony with God. They were not alienated from Him. Therefore, there was no need to unite them with God, for they were already in an excellent relationship with Him. Gulley does not seem to have thought about this important point. As already noted, the statement 'He [the second Adam] united God and humans within Himself' (Gulley 2012:442), does not make sense if it is made with reference to God and spiritually pre-fall humans.

Gulley (2012:448) also asserts: 'Where the God-human relationship was broken by the first Adam, the second Adam began by restoring the broken relationship within His divine-human nature'. Again, this statement suggests that fallen, sinful humans united with God within Jesus' divine-human nature. Therefore, it can be argued that Jesus did assume a fallen, sinful human nature during the incarnation, for it was that nature that was in a state of alienation from God. Restoration of the relationship between God and humans began with the incarnation and continued to Calvary.

In terms of how God dealt with the dual problem of sin, Gulley opines that He did it through Jesus' gifting humans His sinless life as well as His substitutionary death.

### **13.3.3 Jesus Gifted His Followers His Sinless Life**

Gulley (2012:439) opines: 'Christ gifts them [His followers] His sinless life as well as His substitutionary death'. He adds: 'Likewise He had to be free from sin in His nature (not just external acts) in order to save humans from their sinful natures' (Gulley 2012:441). Jesus has indeed gifted His followers with His substitutionary death, and hence dealt with the sins they commit. Sin in the flesh needed to be condemned in Jesus Christ's flesh (cf. Rom 8:3). This implies that He assumed the very flesh in which the sin dwelt, and it needed to be condemned. He had to live a holy life in the very flesh, in which sin needed to be condemned. In my view, sin as a law residing in our flesh, could only be dealt with by Jesus Christ, had He assumed a fallen, sinful nature. It was not enough for God to simply gift His followers with His sinless life. Our fallen, sinful human nature needed to be assumed by Jesus – made to obey God, impaled on Calvary's cross, and glorified through the resurrection. This is what actually happened in Jesus Christ's life. The sinless life that Jesus has gifted His followers, was the life He lived in the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed.

Gulley's model, which exempts Jesus from receiving a spiritually fallen, sinful human nature from Mary, does not seriously take into account the dual problem of sin. It is for this reason that Gulley suggests a solution, which only requires Jesus to gift His followers His sinless life and His substitutionary death. I contend, therefore, that Gulley's model of

Jesus Christ's human nature should be rejected for failing to provide a satisfactory solution to the dual problem of sin in light of what Scripture teaches.

Another problematic area in Gulley's Christology involves Jesus proving that God's law can be kept by human beings.

#### **13.3.4 Jesus Christ Proved that God's Law can be Kept**

Gulley (2012:436) opines: 'The Son of Man proved that God's law can be kept, and in so doing showed that God is just to have such commandments (which means there is no excuse for law breaking)'. He contends: 'The incarnation means He [God] entered into human living personally; and from His own experience learned what it is like to live as a human' (Gulley 2012:437). Gulley adds: 'Christ lived His obedient human life, doing His Father's will, as an example for humans to follow' (Gulley 2012:439).

These three statements are absolutely correct. Gulley has to be commended for making these statements, which actually confirm that he takes God's word seriously. However, these statements only make sense within the context of the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature. Indeed, Jesus could have proved in a sinless human nature that God's law can be kept, and in so doing showed that God is just to have such commandments. Adam failed in his sinless human nature. It does indeed make sense that Jesus should prove in His sinless human nature that God's law can be kept. However, the human nature that Jesus found was a fallen, sinful human nature. Therefore, for Jesus in a sinless human nature to prove to the fallen, sinful human beings (born-again, of course) that God's law can be kept, is a contradiction in terms. Of what help to the fallen, sinful human beings would Jesus' obedience be, if He assumed a sinless human nature? He would then be related to the unfallen Adam, but not to the fallen, sinful human beings. Such a Jesus would be far removed from the fallen, sinful human beings. The fallen, sinful human beings could then still be excused for sinning, because there was no one who has kept God's law in a fallen, sinful human nature. However, if Jesus assumed a spiritually fallen, sinful human nature, and in that nature kept God's law, then there is no excuse for law

breaking. Born-again humans can then keep God's law by maintaining a faith relationship with Jesus.

The statement that Jesus learned from His own experience what it is like to live as a human can only make sense to the unfallen human beings if, as Gulley suggests, Jesus spiritually assumed an unfallen human nature. The life God expects born-again fallen, sinful human beings to live, cannot be learned by a Jesus who assumed a sinless human nature. Such a Jesus cannot serve as an example in obedient living to fallen, sinful born-again human beings. This is because fallen, sinful born-again human beings live their lives in a battle with their fallen, sinful natures, which Gulley's Jesus did not experience. Therefore, Gulley's pre-fall model needs to be rejected, for it is of no help to fallen, sinful born-again followers of Jesus.

Gulley (2012:426) suggests that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit. This statement needs to be critically evaluated.

### **13.3.5 Jesus Christ was Born of the Holy Spirit**

According to Gulley (2012:426), '[t]he Father gave (John 3:16), the Son was willing to come (Heb. 10:7), and was born of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18)'. He adds: 'He [Jesus] was born of the Holy Spirit through a virgin' (Gulley 2012:426). The question that I need to ask Gulley is this: Was Jesus *born* of the Holy Spirit or *conceived* of the Holy Spirit? The announcement to Mary was this: 'And behold you will *conceive* in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS' (Luke 1:31; emphasis added). To Joseph the announcement was this: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is *conceived* in her is of the Holy Spirit' (Matt 1:18; emphasis added).

I have surveyed the NT to find at least one text that confirms that Jesus was *born* of the Holy Spirit, and I could not find any. In his response to my e-mail in which I had requested him to clarify some of his views, Gulley responded to some of my questions, but not to this one. In one of his responses, which I assumed, referred to the question regarding his statements that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, Gulley noted that he was merely

reporting a teaching that was in existence with respect to Jesus Christ's human nature (Gulley 2017). However, the contexts in which Gulley makes the two statements I have cited are the virgin birth and a unique nature (Gulley 2012:426). With respect to the new-birth Christology what I earlier referred to as 'Davis' new-birth Christology', he states:

We conclude, therefore, that those two births [Jesus' birth and our spiritual or new birth] are not equivalent, even though the Holy Spirit is operative in both. In the birth of Christ, the Holy Spirit is creatively present in a way that is unique, and which is never duplicated in the new birth (Gulley 2012:434).

It would appear that Gulley uses the phrase 'born of the Holy Spirit' with respect to Jesus Christ unconsciously. He simply wants to say that Jesus Christ's entrance into this world was by the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, as the Bible puts it, Jesus Christ was *conceived* of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' conception was not natural – it did not involve a male human seed. It was a miraculous conception. When the Bible refers to Jesus' birth, this is what it records: 'And she [Mary] will bring forth [give birth to] a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:21); 'And behold, you will *conceive* in your womb and bring forth [give birth to] a Son, and shall call His name JESUS' (Luke 1:31; emphasis added); 'And she [Mary] brought forth [gave birth to] her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn' (Luke 2:7); and 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law' (Gal 4:4). Jesus Christ was *born* of Mary and was *conceived* of the Holy Spirit. This is what is clearly taught in Scripture.

Other statements that Gulley makes, confirm that he has unconsciously used the phrase 'born of the Holy Spirit' with respect to Jesus. He asserts, for instance: 'Christ was eternally divine as God, and was miraculously born into this world through the Holy Spirit, receiving humanity through the Spirit's work in Mary' (Gulley 2012:427). Again, Gulley asserts: 'Credit for Christ's birth rests fully in God's Spirit – Mary was only a willing means. Just as our salvation rests fully in Christ, so Christ's birth as a human, rests fully in the



Holy Spirit' (Gulley 2012:427-428). Gulley's point seems to be that, if it had not been for the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus would not have been born in this world.

It is important that Gulley should simply state that Jesus' conception in Mary's womb was the work of the Holy Spirit, for it is misleading to say that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, especially that the Bible teaches that, to be born of the Holy Spirit, is to be born again. It is the fallen, sinful human beings, who have committed sin, who are required to be born of the Holy Spirit or born again. In this light, Jesus related to Nicodemus: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). Again, Jesus held: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:5). Then Jesus explained: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6).

That Gulley does not imply that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit in the sense in which the rest of the human beings are supposed to be born, is evidenced by this statement: 'Jesus alone did not need the new birth – which says that something about His birth puts Him in a class by Himself' (Gulley 2012:435). Yet, when Gulley talks about Jesus' birth, his emphasis is on the miraculous nature of His entrance into this world.

In my view, Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. After conception, the process was normal up to Jesus' birth. When the time arrived for Jesus to be born, Mary gave birth to Him in the same way that other women give birth to their babies. There is no suggestion in the Bible that Mary gave birth to Jesus in a miraculous way. I therefore conclude that Jesus Christ was born of Mary and not of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings about spiritual birth and brought about the physical conception of Jesus Christ in Mary's womb. Women give birth to physical life. Clarity is very important when a subject that has the potential to be misinterpreted is under discussion. Therefore, Gulley may have to remove the following phrase from his Christology: 'Christ was born of the Holy Spirit'. It is misleading and can easily be confused with the teachings of Davis and Sequeira. This, of course, does not mean that Davis' and Sequeira's teachings are wrong. I am simply suggesting that Gulley may be understood

to teach what these scholars teach, when he actually does not. I already dealt with Sequeira's teachings in this concern.

Another problematic area of Gulley's Christology refers to what he calls the 'damaged image of God'. What was this damaged image?

### **13.3.6 The Damaged Image of God in Jesus Christ**

Gulley (2012:434) opines that 'as God became the second Adam, He entered human creation and assumed human nature with its damaged image of God, even though He did not take its depravity'. What does Gulley mean when he asserts that God 'assumed human nature with its damaged image of God'? What was this 'damaged image of God'? What does Gulley mean when he says that God 'did not take its depravity'?

To appreciate Gulley's argument, it is important to consider the context of the statement. Gulley presents his own view of Jesus Christ's human nature. He does this by first discussing pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity. He then compares and contrasts the pre-fall Adam and Jesus. He also compares and contrasts the post-fall Adam and Jesus. Contrasting the pre-fall Adam and Jesus, Gulley (2012:434) opines: 'Whereas Adam had a human nature free from the consequences of sin, Christ took upon Himself a human nature that was weakened by a long heredity of sin, even though He did not actually sin'.

Gulley explains: 'In other words, the first Adam was created by the pre-incarnate Jesus as a sinless human in the image of God. But as God became the second Adam, He entered human creation and assumed human nature with its damaged image of God, even though He did not take its depravity' (Gulley 2012:434). Then Gulley adds: 'Unlike the post-fall Adam, Jesus was the sinless Son of God on a mission to save sinners (their sinful natures and acts), and did not participate in sin, either in nature or acts' (Gulley 2012:434).

Another statement that helped me to understand what Gulley avers, is: 'Getting tired, needing sleep, getting hungry, and so on were not problems for the pre-fall Adam, but

they were for the post-fall Adam. Sin in nature and acts was a problem for the first Adam, but not for the second Adam' (Gulley 2012:435); and 'He [Jesus] identified with fallen human nature in every way except in sin in nature and life' (Gulley 2012:435).

Since, according to Gulley, Jesus did not identify with the fallen human nature in sin, it could be argued that the 'damaged image' which He assumed, refers to a fallen physical human nature, which includes '[g]etting tired, needing sleep, getting hungry, and so on' (Gulley 2012:435). Thus, whereas we have a 'damaged image' and are depraved, Jesus assumed a 'damaged image', but did not take its depravity.

I must confess that it has been very difficult to figure out what Gulley is conveying here, especially that when it applies to humans other than Jesus, he seems to use the phrase 'damaged image' to both their spiritual and physical states after sin. Gulley (2012:145) states: 'It is true that Adam "had a son in his own likeness, in his own image" (Gen. 5:3), a damaged image, but Adam's son still bore the image of God'. I believe that 'likeness' and 'image' both refer to aspects of our nature – spiritual and physical. Seth and all other descendants of Adam were born after Adam had fallen into sin. Therefore, they were born with a 'damaged image', both spiritually and physically. After citing Genesis 9:6, Gulley concludes: 'Clearly fallen humans retain the image of God, even if in a damaged form' (Gulley 2012:145). It would appear, in Gulley's opinion, that where humans other than Jesus are concerned, 'damaged image' is in both their spiritual and physical natures. Gulley does not distinguish 'damaged image' in terms of spiritual and physical natures. However, because he wants to exempt Jesus from the 'damaged image' in a spiritual human nature, he applies 'damaged image' to only His physical nature.

In terms of depravity, Gulley (2012:146) asserts: 'Depravity affects body, mind, and spirit – the total person'. This is probably the reason why he suggests that God 'assumed human nature with its damaged image of God, even though He did not take its depravity' (Gulley 2012:434). In this case, Gulley implies that, whereas '[d]epravity affects body, mind, and spirit – the total person', in as far as human beings other than Jesus are concerned, Jesus 'assumed human nature with its damaged image of God, even though

He did not take its depravity'. This is confusing: If the 'damaged image' in Jesus refers to only His physical nature, it is difficult to tell what was really involved in the incarnation. It is possible that Gulley is suggesting that, in terms of Jesus, the 'damaged image' applied only to His 'body', because this is the physical aspect of our human nature. This would imply that Jesus' body and mind were not like those of the pre-fall Adam, but like those of the post-fall Adam – in other words, Jesus assumed a weak body. His human spirit (the inner being) was filled with the Holy Spirit right from the womb. Is this what Gulley, suggests? It is difficult to tell.

In my view, in his effort to exempt Jesus from sin in nature (a tendency or leaning), Gulley has to use the terms 'damaged image' and 'depravity' in such a way that, where humans other than Jesus are concerned, the 'damaged image' applies to both their spiritual and physical natures, whereas, in terms of Jesus, the 'damaged image' applies only to His physical nature. Depravity applies only to humans other than Jesus. This use of terms, however, is inconsistent.

As I noted earlier, the alternative model of Jesus Christ's humanity is more difficult to defend than the post-fall model. It can only be defended by the mentioned kind of inconsistency in the use of terms such as 'damaged image' and 'depravity'. This does not mean that we have to always apply terms to Jesus and other human beings similarly, for this is not possible. We *are* human beings, but Jesus *became* a human being. We are only human, while Jesus is divine and human. Jesus is the God-Man. However, it would appear that on His human side, He assumed what could be the 'damaged image' of God, both spiritually and physically. In His case, however, His human spirit was always under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He did not allow the desires of His flesh to control His mind. Instead, His mind was always in control of His entire being. The Holy Spirit, dwelling in Jesus' human spirit, controlled His entire being through His mind.

My view is that Jesus assumed our depraved nature, but He did not Himself get depraved. The nature that He assumed was one which was affected in 'body, mind, and spirit', by Adam's fall. Nevertheless, as I have already pointed out, His mind was under the control

of the Holy Spirit right from the beginning of His life. Thus, even though He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, both spiritually and physically, He never was a sinner. He only assumed the fallen, sinful human nature to redeem it.

Related to the concept of 'damaged image' is the concept of propensity. Gulley's use of this term requires a critical evaluation.

### **13.3.7 Jesus had neither Inherent nor Developed Propensities**

According to Gulley (2012:433), '[t]he meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' (original emphasis). In Gulley's opinion, 'Evil propensities (a leaning to sin) are (1) acquired through being born a sinner, and are (2) developed through sinning. Christ had neither' (Gulley 2012:454). Since he opines that Jesus had neither 'inherent' nor 'developed' propensities, and '[t]he meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' (Gulley 2012:433), it follows that he is a pre-fall Christologist. Thus, the statement, '[s]o in human nature, Christ was unlike the pre-fall Adam and unlike the post-fall Adam, even though there are similarities', is a misleading statement. The truth is that Gulley is a pre-fall Christologist. However, he does acknowledge that physically, Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature. In other words, his model could be referred to as a 'unique pre-fall model' of Jesus Christ's humanity. I use the term 'unique' here, because Gulley's model includes both the pre-fall and post-fall elements of human nature. The term 'unique pre-fall model' is probably misleading. Gulley's current model should simply be called a 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall model', or 'alternative Christology', as Zurcher calls Dederen's model. As I have already noted, if Gulley's statement, '[t]he meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam', is to apply to his model, then Jesus Christ's human nature is pre-fall. Thus, the categorisation by Zurcher (1999:222) of Gulley's Christology applies even today.

However, is it true that Jesus had neither 'natural' (born with) nor 'developed' propensities? In my view, Jesus assumed 'natural' (born with) propensities, which did not get 'developed' or 'cultivated', because He did not commit any sin throughout His life. In other words, Jesus assumed a spiritual nature that had a 'leaning to sin'. I have already noted that this did not make Jesus a sinner in need of salvation, because His human nature was not all He was – He was also God. He only assumed a nature with 'natural' propensities in order to deal with those 'natural' propensities. Sinners are those who are conceived in this world in the natural way, but Jesus's conception in Mary's womb was by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' entrance into this world is called 'the incarnation'. This is what distinguishes Jesus from us – He is the God-Man. How can one speak of Jesus being a sinner, simply because He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, when actually He was also divine? It cannot be. We must never think of Jesus Christ's human nature independent of His divine nature as if He were two persons. Jesus was one Person with two distinct natures. He would only have been a sinner if He had committed sin. Indeed, if His entrance into this world had not been by way of the incarnation, but by that which is common to all human beings, He would have been a sinner in need of redemption.

There is yet another problematic area in Gulley's Christology. It concerns Jesus Christ's mortality and immortality.

### **13.3.8 Jesus Christ did not Need to be Changed from Mortality to Immortality**

Gulley (2012:471-472) opines: 'Christ didn't need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility, or from mortality to immortality, for He was sinless and divine (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) throughout His life on earth, and thus different from all His followers who will be raised at His second advent (1 Cor. 15:50-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-18)'.

My concern in this statement is the aspect of Jesus' mortality and immortality. Is it true that He did not need to be changed from mortality to immortality? Where does Gulley get this information in God's word?

There is another statement that Gulley makes that seems to contradict the one I have quoted above:

Having said this we need to carefully think through what death means to an eternal God compared to what death means to a created being, for Jesus Christ was both, united in the unique God-Man forever. This means He was a union of an *immortal* divine nature and a *mortal* human nature; for God alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16) (Gulley 2012:467; emphasis added).

There is no doubt in Gulley's Christology that the human side of Jesus was mortal, and at Calvary's cross, He died. About Jesus' divine side, Gulley (2012:467) opines: 'Just as Christ's divine nature was alive but quiescent in the womb, so it was alive and quiescent in the tomb'. Gulley correctly avers: 'Divinity cannot die because it is immortal' (Gulley 2012:467). Jesus' inherent divinity did prevent His mortal humanity from dying. This is because, 'throughout His human life, His divinity was laid aside (*kenosis*, Phil. 2: 2-8), meaning that while He remained fully God, He chose not to use His divinity to His own advantage, because He came to live and die as a human' (Gulley 2012:467-468). Up to this point I am in agreement with Gulley.

Nevertheless, I need clarification when it comes to Jesus' bodily resurrection, where Gulley opines that Jesus did not need to be changed from mortality to immortality, because He was sinless and divine throughout His life on earth. Jesus Christ rose from eternal death. Was it not because He was mortal that He died? Did the resurrection not make Him immortal? Is Gulley suggesting that, after the resurrection, Jesus remained 'a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature'? (Gulley 2012:467). It is really difficult to understand Gulley's line of thought in this concern.

The challenge I face here is to understand a pre-fall Christologist. Since Gulley believes that, spiritually, Jesus assumed Adam's pre-fall human nature, which was sinless, and throughout His life on earth He did not commit sin and was divine, He assumes that Jesus did not have to be changed from mortality to immortality. It was because Jesus' divinity

was quiescent at Calvary's cross, that He died eternally. In my view, the resurrection immortalised Jesus' humanity. That which is mortal, needs to be immortalised. My view is that currently the God-Man is no longer 'a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature', but 'a union of an immortal divine nature and an immortal human nature'. It is because Jesus' human nature is immortal that His followers will become immortal at His second coming. He is now an immortal God-Man. Thus, it could be argued that His humanity had to be changed from mortality to immortality. Gulley's view should thus be rejected.

Related to the view I have just evaluated, Gulley (2012:471) argues that there was a bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection. I will now evaluate the aspects of corruptibility and incorruptibility.

### **13.3.9 Jesus Christ did not Need to be Changed from Corruptibility to Incorruptibility**

This view is more difficult to evaluate than the previous one. Nevertheless, I will follow it through with God's word. Is it true that Jesus Christ did not need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility? Is it true that there is a bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection? In my opinion, the challenge I face here is again to understand the thinking of a pre-fall Christologist. What is interesting is that, when it comes to the issue of corruptibility and incorruptibility, Gulley seems to forget that Jesus assumed a body that was capable of undergoing decay, but which did not undergo decay, because it was not in God's plan that it should undergo decay. It was a physically weak and mortal body, but when Jesus died and was buried, God raised Him from His grave in an incorruptible state.

Gulley (2012:471-472) asserts:

There is bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of resurrection. Christ didn't need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility, or from mortality to immortality, for He was sinless and divine (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) throughout His life on earth,



and thus different from all His followers who will be raised at His second advent (1 Cor. 15:50-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-18).

I have noted that Gulley believes that Jesus assumed a 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' human nature. It was a nature that had elements of both the pre-fall and post-fall natures. Spiritually, Jesus assumed a pre-fall human nature, while physically, He assumed a post-fall human nature. Gulley holds this view in common with a number of other SDA Christologists.

Thus, when Gulley suggests that '[t]here is bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection', he implies that Jesus did not need to undergo any change because 'He was sinless and divine'. It is true that the sinless Adam did not need any change to his nature. Since, as Gulley suggests, Jesus assumed the pre-fall spiritual human nature and in His whole life He did not commit any sin, He did not need to undergo any change at the resurrection. Apart from that, Jesus was divine. A divine nature does not change. This makes sense.

However, there are some NT texts that suggest that Jesus assumed the same fallen, sinful human nature that all descendants of Adam are born with. For example, the Bible relates: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3). Adam was not 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' when he came from the creative hands of His Maker, while Romans 8:3 refers to sin as nature – the problem that the man of Romans 7 struggled with. God sent Jesus 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', to condemn sin as nature. Therefore, Jesus did not assume a pre-fall spiritual human nature, but He assumed the very human nature in which the law of sin dwells (Rom 7:23), which God sent Him to condemn. The Bible does not say that Jesus was sent in a sinful flesh, but 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Christologists such as Gulley have suggested that this is evidence that Jesus did not assume a spiritual nature in which the law of sin dwells. These scholars comment that Jesus assumed a fallen human nature, only in as far as His physical nature was concerned (cf. e.g. Weber 1994:71; Adams 1994:59).

Nevertheless, the problem that God wanted to deal with, as indicated in Romans 7 and 8, was not primarily physical, but spiritual. Jesus did not primarily condemn our physical nature, but 'sin in the flesh'. He came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', because His existence was through the incarnation. He was a union of a fallen, sinful human nature and a holy divine nature. He became what He had not always been by native right. I will explain this thought in detail when giving my own submissions.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews stated: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh (σάρκός) and blood (αἵματος), He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb 2:14-15). Pre-fall Christologists such as Gulley suggest that this text simply means that Jesus became human. The challenge we face here is that the phrase 'the children have partaken of flesh (σάρκός) and blood (αἵματος)', is not a reference to pre-fall humans, but to post-fall humans, who are not just humans, but humans in sinful flesh. In the ESV, the text states: 'Since therefore the children share in flesh (σάρκός) and blood (αἵματος), he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery'. It is correct to argue that Jesus partook of flesh and of blood, in order to become mortal. In order to die, He needed to be mortal. The pre-fall Adam had conditional immortality, which depended on obedience and partaking of the tree of life (cf. Gen 2:16-17; 3:22-24). Mortality belongs to post-fall human beings and not to pre-fall humans (cf. Heb 2:14).

I was fascinated when I studied Hebrews 2:14-15 together with 1 Corinthians 15:50. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul argued: 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption'. In the ESV, the text states: 'I tell you this, brothers: flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable'.

This is what I noticed: Jesus partook of ‘flesh (σαρκός) and blood (αἵματος)’, which ‘cannot inherit the kingdom of God’. If He therefore partook of ‘flesh (σαρκός) and blood (αἵματος)’ which refers to a post-fall humanity, it follows that Jesus assumed a post-fall humanity. It is a well-known fact that the post-fall humanity is corruptible (NKJV) or perishable (ESV). Thus, it can be argued that Jesus assumed a corruptible or perishable human nature – the very human nature He found.

In my view, if Jesus’ body had existed without His divine side, and in God’s plan it had been arranged that it should decay, then His body would have decayed because it was the same body that we have, which undergoes decay. I find support for this view in both the OT and the NT. In Acts 2:27 it is suggested that Jesus did not ‘see corruption [undergo decay]’ (Acts 2:27), because God raised Him from His grave. Peter explained: ‘Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up this Jesus to sit on his throne, he foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of Jesus, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption [undergo decay]’ (Acts 2:29-31). Here Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11. Paul took up this thought in Acts 13:30-37.

There is no hint in God’s word that Jesus’ body was incorruptible. We can only speak of Jesus’ incorruptibility as God. Of course, Jesus never existed as a human without His divine side, as He was the God-Man. However, the humanity that He assumed was corruptible. It was the very ‘flesh (σαρκός) and blood (αἵματος)’ which, without receiving incorruption, could not inherit the kingdom of God. It can be argued, therefore, that there is no bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection, because the Jesus of Calvary needed to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility and from mortality to immortality. It must be understood that I am referring here to a Jesus whose divinity was quiescent in the tomb. I absolutely concur with the fact that Jesus never existed as a human without His divine side – He always existed as the God-Man, but God’s word allows us to discuss what is revealed. What God has not revealed,

belongs to Him (Deut 29:29). It is possible to discuss the human nature of Jesus without making reference to His divine nature, for even His disciples, for three and a half years, accepted Him as a human being. Note should be made, however, that Jesus was a paradox. His nature and life will always remain a mystery.

The term 'flesh and blood' needs more discussion. When Peter responded to Jesus' question about who the disciples thought He was, Jesus told him: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt 16:17). In the ESV, we read: 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'. It will be noted that the 'flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα)', that did not reveal to Peter that Jesus was the Son of the living God, is the 'flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα)', which 'cannot enter the kingdom of God' (1 Cor 15:50).

The pre-fall Adam did not need the Father to reveal Himself to him in the sense in which the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ, because Adam knew God from creation. Therefore, the 'flesh and blood' that needed the Father to reveal Jesus as the Christ is a post-fall humanity. Hebrews 2:14 indicates that Jesus Christ partook of the same 'flesh and blood'. It can thus be argued that He assumed a post-fall human nature. I have already noted that the post-fall humanity is corruptible.

I need to add another text, which suggests that 'flesh and blood' is a reference to a post-fall humanity. John wrote about Jesus: 'He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood (αἱμάτων) nor of the will of the flesh (σαρκός) nor of the will of man, but of God' (John 1:11-13, ESV).

This text suggests that the people who received Jesus by believing in His Name, were born, neither of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. This is the kind of birth that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God', and 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless

one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:3, 5, ESV). The people who are said to be 'flesh and blood', are required to be born of the Holy Spirit before entering God's kingdom. Jesus gave the reason for this: 'That which is born of the flesh (σαρκός) is flesh (σάρξ), and that which is born of the Spirit (πνεύματος) is spirit (πνεῦμά)' (John 3:6, ESV).

Since the people who are required to be born again before entering God's kingdom are *flesh and blood*, which is a reference to post-fall humans, and Jesus partook of *flesh and blood*, it follows that Jesus partook of a post-fall human nature. In my view, Jesus partook of a post-fall humanity – both spiritually and physically.

A question that would naturally arise is: If Jesus partook of a post-fall human nature that requires to be born again, why did He not experience a new birth? In this light, Guley (2012:435) asserts that 'no biblical verse speaks of Jesus' need for either the new birth or a change of nature at His resurrection'. He suggests that this is evidence that Jesus' human nature was different from ours. However, this is not necessarily the case. It is true that Jesus did not experience the new birth and did not need to. This was because, while He truly partook of a post-fall human nature, He was the God-Man. He became a unique post-fall human – the only Person in the entire universe to have two natures. His conception was by the power of the Holy Spirit – without the involvement of a male human seed. In Jesus we have God who partook of a post-fall human nature. Right from the beginning of His human existence, He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Throughout His human life, He allowed the Holy Spirit to control Him. He did not commit any sin. Thus, He did not need to be born again, for He was not a post-fall human being in the sense in which we are post-fall human beings. He became that which He had not been by native right. He became a post-fall human in order to be our substitute.

Concerning Jesus' resurrection body in relation to His Calvary body, to my mind a change took place to His Calvary body so that, whereas it remained a material body, it had the law of sin (sin as nature or a tendency) removed from it. Jesus came out of His grave with a glorified body – a body like the one that Adam had before he fell into sin. That Jesus'

body remained a material body is clear from the narratives of His appearances after His resurrection. For example, when Mary Magdalene clung to Him, He said to her: ‘Do not cling to me, for I have not ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”’ (John 20:17). If Jesus had an immaterial body (whatever that might be), Mary Magdalene would not be able to cling to Him.

Eight days after Jesus had risen, He told the doubting Thomas: ‘Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing’ (John 20:27). If Jesus had an ‘immaterial body’ after His resurrection, He would not have told Thomas to put his hand into His side. That this is the case, is confirmed by Jesus Himself: ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have’ (Luke 24:38, 39). When Jesus saw that they still doubted, He asked for food, and when they gave Him fish and some honeycomb, ‘He took it and ate in their presence’ (Luke 24:43).

In John 21:13, the Bible reports that the post-resurrected Jesus ‘took the bread and gave it to them [the disciples], and likewise the fish’. This echoes what He had done before His death. He is seen as a physical being walking with Peter (John 21:19-23). Thus, it can be concluded that His resurrection body was a physical body, which had been glorified.

In his e-mail to me, Gulley suggested that the Bible was silent with respect to the wounds that Jesus received from scourging. He also suggested that the nail and spear marks on Jesus’ body suggest that no change took place to His body – it remained the way it was before the resurrection (Gulley 2017). He observed that the Bible is silent on the issue of the wounds on Jesus’ body that resulted from scourging. With respect to His change of nature, Gulley (2012:435) asserts that there is no biblical verse that speaks of Jesus’ need for ‘a change of nature at His resurrection’. My view, however, is that Gulley argues from silence, which is not acceptable. Second, if there was no change to Jesus’ body, then we should expect that His wounds would still be fresh – then and even today. I do

not believe that Gulley himself would accept this. Indeed, the nail and spear marks are still on Jesus' body. However, the wounds got healed, leaving the nail and spear marks, which will remain on Jesus' body for all eternity. For purposes of God's plan of salvation, the nail and spear marks will remain on Jesus' body for endless ages. These marks do not, however, suggest that no change took place to Jesus' body. It can also be argued that, if no change took place to Jesus' physical nature, then He can still experience hunger, thirst, fatigue, ageing, and other physical aspects of the post-fall humanity. I noted that Gulley believes that Jesus assumed a post-fall physical human nature.

It can be concluded that Jesus' resurrection body is His Calvary body which was glorified. His Calvary human nature had the law of sin (a leaning or tendency to sin) removed from it through the resurrection. Physically, healing took place to His wounded body, but the nail and spear marks were preserved on His body for the purposes of God's plan of salvation. His body changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility. For the arguments I have presented, Gulley's views of Jesus' Calvary and resurrection body should be rejected.

The last problematic area of Gulley's Christology that I will discuss, relates to Jesus' struggle with temptation to the point of 'desiring to escape the cruelty from humans and the agony of being a sin-bearer for the world' (Gulley 2012:447).

### **13.3.10 Jesus Christ Desired to Escape the Cross**

Gulley (2012:447) asserts: 'God sent Jesus behind enemy lines in the midst of the greatest battle to win back the Kingdom through pain and suffering that took Him to Calvary. He suffered, desiring to escape the cruelty from humans and the agony of being a sin-bearer for a world'. Certainly, Jesus experienced untold suffering from His early age. Throughout His public ministry He was persecuted. He received verbal, social, psychological, and physical persecution. There is no one on the whole earth who has ever suffered the way that Jesus did. The intensity of Jesus' suffering increased as He neared the time of His substitutionary death on Calvary's cross. Gethsemane is the proof of Gulley's assertion that 'He suffered, desiring to escape the cruelty from humans and the agony of being a sin-bearer'.

Luke's record has put it this way: 'And being in agony, He prayed earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (Luke 22:44). Three times He prayed: "Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42; cf. Matt 26:39, 42, 44). Before He entered into this agonizing prayer, Jesus said to Peter, James, and John: 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with me' (Matt 26:38).

It would appear that human nature generally recoils from suffering and death. This explains why Jesus Christ admonished: 'And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matt 10:28). Jesus Christ knew that, since human nature recoils from suffering and death, it was likely that one of His disciples would deny Him in order to escape death. It was because of fear to suffer and die that Peter denied Jesus three times (Matt 26:70, 72, 74).

It must be noted that the suffering that human beings experience for God's Name is physical suffering. Thus, the physical suffering that Jesus Christ experienced was probably common to His followers. Tradition suggests that Peter accepted to be crucified head down and legs up (cf. White 2009:313). Tradition also relays that John was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil; but the Lord miraculously preserved his life (cf. White 2009:331). However, when his persecutors saw that he did not die, they had his eyes pierced, and banished him to the Island of Patmos. During the Reformation, one of Jesus' followers, Jan Hus (1374-1415), was burnt on the stake. He did not protest his death, but died, singing 'Hosanna to the Son of David'. This suggests that Jesus Christ's suffering was beyond physical suffering. Indeed, His physical nature, which Gulley suggests was the same post-fall physical nature that we possess, recoiled from suffering. However, the intensity of His agony was because He was about to bear the sins of the entire world. He was going to bear the curse of the law (cf. Gal 3:13), and was going to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:21).



The question I would like to ask Gulley is this: Since Jesus Christ's agony in Gethsemane had more to do with His fear to bear the sins of this world than with His physical suffering, which spiritual nature fits the description of His agony in Gethsemane? Was it a pre-fall spiritual nature or a post-fall spiritual nature?

Peter has put it this way: 'For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit' (1 Pet 3:18). He admonishes the Christians: 'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God' (1 Pet 4:1-2).

To many pre-fall Christologists, Jesus Christ's suffering in the flesh was a physical suffering. However, I have already noted that Jesus' suffering had more to do with incurring God's curse (Gal 3:13), which meant that He was separated from His Father. It was the fear to be separated from His Father for all eternity that made His suffering beyond physical suffering. It would appear that the flesh He assumed was the very flesh in which the law of sin dwells. It must have been that flesh, that was trying to pull Him away from His Father's will. Had He assumed a pre-fall spiritual human nature, that nature would not have desired to go its own way to the extent that we witness in Gethsemane. As I already noted, it was unnatural for a pre-fall Adam to sin against God. His pre-fall spiritual nature was inclined toward God's will. It is harder to do God's will in a flesh that is indwelt by the law of sin than it was for the pre-fall Adam, whose spiritual nature was in perfect harmony with God's will.

That Jesus Christ's suffering in the flesh had to do with the flesh in which the law of sin dwelt, is implied in the statement: 'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God' (1 Pet 4:1-2). Lusts of men are motivated by the law of sin, which dwells in our flesh. In this light, John wrote: 'For all that is in the world – the lust of the

flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world' (1 John 2:16). To my mind, Jesus suffered in the flesh throughout His life, because He did not allow the law of sin to dwell in the flesh that He assumed, to cause Him to commit sin. Because the post-fall human flesh desires to live a life independent of God, when its desires are not fulfilled, the person suffers in the flesh. This appears to have been what happened. In Gethsemane and on Calvary's cross, Jesus Christ suffered in the flesh in which the law of sin dwelt. This, to me, explains Jesus Christ's untold agony better. Peter suggested that Jesus Christ's followers will cease from sin if they allow themselves to suffer in their flesh in which the law of sin dwells. In other words, they will stop sinning if they stop allowing the flesh to control them. They should allow the Holy Spirit to control their being through the mind.

My suggestion, therefore, is that Gulley's statement, 'He suffered, desiring to escape the cruelty from humans and the agony of being a sin-bearer for a world', makes more sense when it applies to Jesus' post-fall spiritual human nature than to His pre-fall spiritual human nature. Thus, on the basis of this argument, Gulley's pre-fall model of Jesus Christ's human nature should be rejected.

As Gulley was formulating His model of Jesus Christ's human nature, some thought patterns influenced him. As I have been studying His Christology, I observed that he was influenced by two thought patterns: The nature of sin and Jesus Christ's mission. I will discuss these two thought patterns.

### **13.4 Undergirding Philosophical Categories and Thought Patterns**

In his Christology, Gulley is concerned about preserving the holiness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was on a mission to solve the sin problem and not to become part of it. I will briefly discuss these two thought patterns.

#### **13.4.1 The Nature of Sin**

Gulley argues that sin is nature before it is an act. Thus, every descendant of Adam is born a sinner in need of a saviour. It follows, therefore, that if Jesus Christ had assumed

the post-fall spiritual human nature, He would have been a sinner in nature and thus in need of a saviour. This would have disqualified Him from being our substitute. He would not have been the blameless Lamb of God.

Some texts guide Gulley as he formulates his model of Jesus Christ's human nature that exempts Jesus from sin in nature. First, in Psalm 51:5, David lamented: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me'. For this reason, David prayed to God: 'Create in me a clean heart, o God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me' (Ps 51:10). In Gulley's thinking, to assume a post-fall spiritual human nature is to be conceived in sin. It is to inherit a depraved spiritual human nature. It is to suggest that Jesus was born a sinner in need of salvation, for David who was conceived in sin, needed salvation. However, nowhere does the Bible suggest that Jesus needed to experience the new birth that David desired and which Jesus Himself spoke of with Nicodemus (John 3:3, 5). Therefore, Jesus did not assume a post-fall spiritual human nature.

Gulley is correct when he argues that sin is nature before it is an act. He is also correct when he asserts that human beings are born sinners in need of salvation. He is, however, wrong when he extends this reasoning to Jesus Christ. This is because Jesus' entrance into this world was not through the natural way that all of us entered this world – He entered this world through the incarnation. We are human beings and nothing else. Jesus entered this world as the God-Man. He only assumed a post-fall human nature in order to redeem human beings. To deal with the dual problem of sin, which Gulley correctly observes, is the lot of all the descendants of Adam, Jesus had to assume the same post-fall spiritual human nature in which the law of sin dwells. He had to experience temptation in a human nature that is common to the people that He came to save.

It is true that all post-fall human beings are born spiritually dead – they are born devoid of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it can be argued that, to suggest that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature, is to necessarily suggest that He was born spiritually dead and thus in need of salvation. It must be noted, nevertheless, that Scripture is clear that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and throughout His life, He was under the

influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the spiritual death, which applies to all descendants of Adam, does not apply to Him. He did indeed assume a post-fall spiritual human nature, but He was also Holy Spirit-filled from the very beginning of His life. When post-fall human beings receive the new-birth experience, they no longer remain spiritually devoid of the Holy Spirit. They become spiritually alive, but still in a post-fall spiritual human nature. They are holy, but still in a post-fall spiritual human nature. Therefore, it was possible for Jesus Christ to be holy in a post-fall spiritual human nature, right from the beginning of His life, because He was filled with the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb.

Other texts that guided Gulley in his formulation of the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature, include Psalm 58:3: 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies', and Isaiah 48:8: 'Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb'. This is the state of all descendants of Adam. Gulley thinks that if we assert that Jesus assumed a post-fall spiritual human nature, then we would imply that He was 'a transgressor from the womb'. However, in Jesus Christ's case, Psalm 58:3 and Isaiah 48:8 did not apply. I have already given the reasons when discussing Psalm 51:5.

In the NT, Gulley was influenced by texts like John 3:6: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. Jesus applied this text to Nicodemus who, in His view, needed to be born again or be born of water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5). Jesus did not apply this text to Himself. Again, this does not suggest that Jesus has assumed a pre-fall spiritual human nature. He simply stated the empirical truth about human nature, which descended from Adam. He excluded Himself from this, because of what I have already noted. While He assumed a post-fall spiritual human nature through the incarnation, He was Holy Spirit-filled from the very beginning of His life. Related to the nature of sin as one reason for suggesting that Jesus Christ assumed a pre-fall spiritual human nature, is His mission.

### **13.4.2 Jesus Christ's Mission Determined His Spiritual Human Nature**

Gulley (2012:434) contends that Jesus Christ did not cross the chasm to become a part of the sin problem, but to solve it, as he asserts: 'This leads us to a hermeneutical principle: God's mission must determine the extent of His identity with fallen human nature' (Gulley 2012:435). Gulley further argues: 'Here's the bottom line: The Son of God did not break His relationship with God and humans in order to restore a broken relationship between God and humans...His mission was to restore and re-create the image of God in humanity, not to lose the image of God Himself' (Gulley 2012:435).

Gulley is correct when he suggests that God's mission must determine the extent of His identity with the fallen human nature. In this light, the angel Gabriel said to Joseph: 'And she [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:21). Paul has put it this way: 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons' (Gal 4:4-5). Jesus Christ Himself stated the mission for which He came: 'For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost' (Matt 18:11). He also related: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). To deal with the problem of sin as a law in the flesh of post-fall human beings, God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Paul put it this way: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3).

How did God deal with the problem for which the second Person of the Godhead was incarnated? The author of the letter to the Hebrews asserted: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb 2:14-15). In Gulley's view, Jesus had to assume a pre-fall spiritual human nature in order to restore the relationship between God and humans. He needed to be holy in both nature

and performance. Thus, had He assumed a post-fall spiritual human nature, He would have become part of the sin problem.

However, the Bible seems to suggest that, in order to restore the relationship between God and humans, Jesus Christ had to assume the very post-fall spiritual human nature that He found. However, He did not become part of the sin problem. I have already noted that, while He assumed a post-fall spiritual human nature in which the law of sin dwells, He did not become a sinner. He only assumed a post-fall spiritual human nature in order to deal with the problem of sin. When He was tempted, He did not give in to the desires of the post-fall spiritual human flesh that He assumed. As a result, He suffered in the post-fall spiritual human flesh that He assumed. Then, about 2,000 years ago, He went with that post-fall spiritual human flesh to Calvary's cross where it was impaled. Through the resurrection, the post-fall spiritual human nature was removed. Thus, Jesus Christ now bears a spiritual human nature like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin.

In my view, Gulley's attempt to preserve the holiness of Jesus Christ, blinds Him to the other way of looking at the issue of God's mission. Jesus Christ needed to assume the very post-fall spiritual human nature that needed to be redeemed. If, as Gulley himself suggests, 'He united God and humans within Himself' (Gulley 2012:442), then Jesus must have assumed the very alienated humanity that needed to be united to God. The pre-fall spiritual human nature was already in perfect harmony with God. As such it did not need to be united to the Father. In my view, by assuming a post-fall spiritual human nature, Jesus Christ objectively united the entire post-fall humanity to the Godhead. He continued the process of reconciliation throughout His earthly life by subjecting the post-fall spiritual human nature to the control of the Holy Spirit. Then, on the cross, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them' (2 Cor 5:19). On the cross, 'He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' (2 Cor 5:21). On the cross, Jesus 'bore our sins in His own body...that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed' (1 Pet 2:24).

Gulley (2012:439) correctly observes: ‘Although Christ’s followers are a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), being fitted for heaven (2 Cor. 3:18), they still exist in a corruptible nature until the second advent of Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-54), and so Christ gifts them His sinless life as well as His substitutionary death’. He is correct when He asserts: ‘Christ’s power saves humans from sin, keeping them from falling, and does so with great joy’ (Gulley 2012: 439). This is true, ‘[s]ince sin is more than an act, Christ didn’t come to save humans only from sinning, but sinful natures too’ (Gulley 2012:431) – Gulley suggests here that Jesus has gifted His followers with His sinless life as well as His substitutionary death. However, He fails to adequately explain how Jesus dealt with sin as nature. Scripture seems to suggest that Jesus’ sinless life that He has gifted to His followers is not a sinless life that He has achieved in a pre-fall spiritual human nature, but in a post-fall spiritual human nature.

### **13.5 Testing Gulley’s Model against the Standard Norm of the Holy Scriptures**

It is important to test Gulley’s model of Jesus Christ’s human nature against the standard norm – the Bible.

During my evaluation of Sequeira and Erickson, I have indicated that, for any Christological claim to be accepted as truth, it must pass the test against the standard norm of God’s word. In my view, Gulley’s model of Jesus Christ’s human nature fails the test against the standard norm of God’s word. He understands the nature of sin correctly and is correct when he argues that sin is both what we are and what we do. He is also correct when he argues that all Adam’s descendants (except Jesus) are born sinners in need of salvation. Again, he is correct when he asserts that we inherit the tendency to sin from our parents, which is the root of the actual sins we commit. He is also correct when he states that we do not inherit Adam’s guilt, for guilt is not transferrable.

However, Gulley fails to take the general context of God’s word into consideration when it comes to the specific nature of Jesus Christ’s humanity. All human beings born into this world after Adam’s sin, have inherited the tendency to sin from their parents. To be our substitute, Jesus Christ needed to assume the very human nature in which the law of sin dwells. To adequately deal with the dual problem of sin, He needed to assume a post-fall

human nature. The pre-fall humans did not need to be united with God, for they were in harmony with Him. It was the post-fall humans who needed to be united to God. For this reason, Jesus needed to assume a post-fall human nature so that this nature could be united to God in Him.

Gulley fails to convincingly explain from God's word how it was possible for Jesus not to inherit the tendency to sin from His mother. It can be argued that he probably agrees with Erickson (2013:689) and Grudem (2015:531-532), who suggest that the influence of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb was so powerful and sanctifying that it prevented sin from being transmitted from Mary to Jesus. Adams (1994:71) also suggests that Jesus Christ bypassed the universal infection of sin through the influence of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. I have noted, however, that Luke 1:35 is written in the context of Mary's question in Luke 1:34: 'How can this be, since I do not have a man?' Gabriel responds to Mary's question regarding the nature of conception, which will definitely not involve a male human being. The text is not talking about how Jesus Christ bypassed the universal infection of sin as Adams (and probably also Gulley) suggests. This is supported by Gabriel's statement to Joseph who thought Mary had played a harlot: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit' (Matt 1:20). The question was: How did Mary conceive when Joseph had not yet officially married her, as he obviously did not yet have sexual intercourse with her? Did she have intercourse with another man?

Paul stated: 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons' (Gal 4:4-5). This text suggests a post-fall human nature. Commenting on the phrase 'made [born] of a woman', the *SDA Bible Commentary* (Vol. 6) states: 'This clearly indicates the humanity of Jesus, and with the previous declaration, sets forth His divine-human nature' (Nichol 1980a:966). My view is that, if this text refers to Jesus Christ's humanity which He received from Mary, then it was a post-fall humanity. Gulley is not able to interpret this text in the context of the nature of humanity after Adam's fall.



In Gulley's Christology, the statement, '[f]or what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3), can be interpreted to suggest that Jesus' spiritual human nature was unlike that of post-fall human beings. He argues that, if Paul had intended to mean that Jesus took a post-fall spiritual human nature, he would have put it this way: 'God did, by sending His own Son in sinful flesh'. The truth, however, according to the context, which is Romans 7:1-8:2, is that Jesus Christ did indeed take a post-fall spiritual human nature. Nevertheless, the post-fall human nature He took was not all, for He was also a divine being. Had He been only a human being, He would have been 'in sinful flesh', just like all post-fall human beings. That He took a post-fall human nature simply to deal with the problem of sin, makes Him unique. Otherwise, to suggest that 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', implies that He did not take the sinful flesh, is to suggest that 'in the likeness of men' (Phil 2:7) implies that He was not a human being, but simply resembled a human being. Gulley does not seem to see this logical conclusion from his argument. The problem of the post-fall human in Romans 7 is not physical, but spiritual. Therefore, it is unlikely that God would provide a physical solution to a spiritual problem. It was not enough for Jesus to take a post-fall *physical* human nature, He also needed to take a post-fall *spiritual* human nature. This appears to be Paul's teaching wherever He has dealt with Jesus' human nature.

Had Gulley studied Hebrews 2:14 together with 1 Corinthians 15:50, he would observe that Hebrews 2:14 is not simply suggesting that Jesus Christ took a human nature – He took a post-fall human nature, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God, unless the tendency to sin is removed from it, and it is immortalised. Had Gulley studied these two texts together with Acts 2:25-32 and 13:30-37, he would have understood that Jesus Christ's body was corruptible or perishable (capable of undergoing decay) and, therefore, needed to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility through the resurrection.

In his attempt to exempt Jesus from sin in nature, Gulley uses texts such as John 6:69, 8:46, and 14:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15 and 7:26, 1 Peter 2:22, and 1 John 3:5. However, these texts either refer to Jesus Christ's divine nature, which is holy, or His

performance, which was faultless. In the NKJV, John 6:69 parallels Matthew 16:16: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'. This refers to Jesus Christ's divinity and not to sinlessness in His human nature. Jesus Christ had a sinless divine nature, which was united to a sinful human nature. In the ESV, Peter asserted that Jesus was 'the Holy One of God'. It is unlikely that he meant, 'He was holy in human nature'. Instead, he meant that Jesus was a divine Person – the Son of God (or God incarnate). Gulley does not seem to observe this in the text, because he is preoccupied with his task of exempting Jesus from sin in nature.

Gulley's model is also taught by Adventist Christologists such as Heppenstall, Webster, Dederen, Adams, and Pfandl. I indicated that this is the model of Jesus' human nature promoted in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Dederen 2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists:2005). I observed that, in evaluating Gulley, I would necessarily be evaluating these two books as well. I will therefore give general remarks, based on my personal observations regarding Gulley's model of Jesus Christ's human nature in the context of what other Adventist Christologists, who share this view, have written.

### **13.6 Personal Observations on Gulley's 'Neither Pre-fall nor Post-fall' Model**

While suggesting that Jesus Christ's human nature was unique, the two Adventist Christologists, Webster and Adams, argue that Jesus took the form and nature of fallen human beings upon Himself. Adams (1994:27) asserts: 'We believe – and have always believed – that Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings!' Webster (1984:451) contends that 'Christ came into the world in the humanity of Adam after the fall and not before the fall, He assumed humanity affected by the laws of heredity and subject to weakness, infirmity and temptation'. This is the view promoted in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005). Interestingly, it is also taught 'that Jesus Christ, while coming in fallen human nature was not infected by original sin and was born without any tendencies and propensities to sin' (Webster 1984:451). Thus, it has been

concluded that the alternative Christology taught by Webster and others is in favour of the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature (cf. Zurcher 1999:221, 273).

In both *Christ Our Substitute* (Gulley 1982) and *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III (Gulley 2012), Gulley's position is that Jesus' human nature was neither that of a pre-fall Adam nor that of a post-fall Adam. I have carefully examined Gulley's Christology to see if he, in any way, suggests that Jesus took a post-fall human nature. In both his 1982 and 2012 books, he carefully avoids stating a position in favour of either the pre-fall or the post-fall models of Jesus' human nature. It is for this reason that, to my mind, Gulley has distinguished himself from the rest of the Adventist Christologists who hold the alternative view of Jesus' humanity. It is probably for this reason that Zurcher (1999:222) concludes that Gulley is a pre-fall Christologist. Gulley (2012:433), however, himself observes: 'The meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam'. Since this is the case and Gulley omits propensities and drives caused as a result of Adam's fall from his model of Jesus' human nature, Zurcher is correct to conclude that Gulley is a pre-fall Christologist.

While I do not accept Gulley's model of Jesus' human nature, I appreciate his consistency in presenting his model. The other Christologists who hold the alternative view are not consistent. How could Jesus take Adam's post-fall nature and at the same time not inherit propensities and drives that are common to the rest of the post-fall human beings? Going back to the history of Adventist Christology will help us to appreciate the dilemma in which these Adventist Christologists have found themselves. After realising that their pioneers taught that Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature, these Adventist Christologists decided to formulate a view that evangelicals would accept, but at the same time appear to not have departed from the view of SDA pioneers like White. It is for this reason that Adams (1994:27) writes: 'We believe – and have always believed – that Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings!' The truth, however, is that the alternative Christology taught by Heppenstall, Webster, Dederen, Adams, and Pfandl, is pre-fall – like Gulley, these Christologists are pre-fall Christologists. Their statements that

they believe and have always believed that Jesus took Adam's post-fall human nature are merely misleading statements.

It is important to make a few remarks on *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005). Since the authors of the two books claim to represent the views of most SDAs worldwide and since it has been established that the alternative Christology they present in these two books, is pre-fall and not post-fall, these authors have made it appear that the SDA Church holds the pre-fall view of Jesus' human nature. The truth, however, is that the SDAs as a collective body do not subscribe to any of the two views – pre-fall or post-fall. It is therefore wrong for the authors of both *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005) to take a position that is shared by only some theologians and church leaders, and not by the entire church. Pastors and lay people who have not studied the history of Adventist Christology, blindly believe a view that does not represent the teaching of the entire church. Zurcher (1999:250) is therefore correct when he writes: 'We recognize that Roy Adams' interpretation represents fairly the position held by a large proportion of Adventists today. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that this point of view is shared by the majority in the worldwide Adventist Church'.

Zurcher (1999:274) is also correct when commenting on the alternative Christology promoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005), when he states: 'We must reconsider any interpretation that lessens or obscures Christ's participation in sinful human nature if we wish for a return to a biblical Christology'. For the reasons that I have already presented in this evaluation, I join Zurcher in rejecting the alternative Christology taught by Heppenstall, Webster, Dederen, Adams, Pfandl, the authors of *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000) and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005), and Gulley.

### **13.7 Conclusion**

This evaluation has established that, while Gulley argues that Jesus' human nature was neither that of the pre-fall nor the post-fall Adam, his model is pre-fall, because it omits the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam. The evaluation has also established that comparatively, Gulley is more consistent in his presentation of the alternative Christology than other Adventist Christologists such as Webster and Adams because, while the others omit the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam from their model, they insist that Jesus took a post-fall human nature and not a pre-fall human nature. On the other hand, Gulley consistently argues that Jesus took neither a pre-fall nor a post-fall human nature.

In Gulley's view, Jesus' mission had determined the human nature He took. He suggests that, since Jesus came to resolve the sin problem, (spiritually) He took Adam's pre-fall human nature. He opines that, if (spiritually) Jesus had taken the post-fall human nature, He would have become part of the sin problem. This would have disqualified Him from being our sinless Saviour. Had Jesus taken the post-fall human nature, He would have become alienated from His Father and would therefore not have achieved His mission of reconciling the alienated humanity to God. Had Jesus taken the post-fall human nature, He would have been a sinner in need of a saviour. It is this thought pattern that motivates Gulley's pre-fall model.

With respect to how Jesus dealt with the dual problem of sin, it is Gulley's contention that it was by coming to earth in a sinless human nature, by living a holy life in that sinless human nature, and by dying a substitutionary death on Calvary's cross. Jesus now gifts His followers with His substitutionary death and His sinless life. However, this view is inadequate, because it fails to take into consideration the fact that the NT suggests that it was by assuming a fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus dealt with sin as nature – sin as a tendency or drive caused as a result of the fall of Adam (cf. Rom 8:3).

According to Gulley, because Jesus is sinless and divine, His resurrection body did not need to be changed from mortality to immortality or from corruptibility to incorruptibility.

This view is, in my opinion, a contradiction of his statement that, by taking a human nature, Jesus became mortal. The evaluation has established that Gulley fails to take into consideration NT texts that suggest that Jesus' human nature was mortal and corruptible, and therefore needed to be changed from mortality to immortality and from corruptibility to incorruptibility. He is, however, on firm ground when he argues that Jesus' resurrection body was material – with bones and flesh. After Jesus' resurrection, His followers touched Him. He showed them the marks of the nails on His hands and the spear mark on His side.

While Gulley has distinguished Himself by doing His own linguistic and theological study to define the possible meanings of the Greek terms σάρξ, ἁμαρτία, ἴσος, ὁμοίωμα, μονογενής, and πρωτότοκος, this evaluation has established that he overlooked the contexts of the texts in which those terms are used in relation to Jesus' human nature. For this reason, he was able to find Jesus with a sinless human nature, even in texts that suggest that He took a fallen, sinful human nature. Thus, it can be argued that he forced his own ideas on those texts. This was done in order to exempt Jesus from sin in nature which, in his view, would have made Jesus a sinner in need of a saviour and therefore disqualified to be our sinless Saviour. I did note, however, that this way of thinking fails to take the fact into consideration that Jesus did not exist as a human being without being God as well. The fallen, sinful human nature He took was joined to His sinless divine nature. Therefore, He was not a sinner like the rest of human beings. He only took our fallen, sinful human nature in order to deal with the root of sin, which is our sinful nature.

Finally, I need to note that Gulley's Christology begins with Jesus on a mission to reconcile the alienated humanity to God. This Jesus could not become part of the sin problem – both in nature and performance. Therefore, (spiritually) He had to take a pre-fall human nature. Gulley interprets the NT texts that suggest that Jesus took a post-fall human nature, to refer to Jesus' physical human nature. However, he fails to explain satisfactorily how Jesus bypassed the transmission of sin in nature from Mary. He fails to explain convincingly how Jesus took a post-fall physical human nature and not a post-fall spiritual human nature. It is for this reason that I have argued for a rejection of Gulley's

model of Jesus' human nature. To my mind, there is no single NT text that suggests that Jesus took a pre-fall human nature.

In the following chapter, I will compare and contrast the views of the three Christologists.

# **CHAPTER 14**

## **CRITICAL EVALUATION:**

### **COMPARING THE THREE MODELS OF JESUS CHRIST'S HUMANIT**

#### **14.1 Introduction**

In the previous three chapters, I have evaluated the Christological views of my selected Christologists. In this chapter, I am going to compare and contrast these views. I will also attempt to reconcile Erickson's view with that of Gulley. I will contend that, instead of three views of Jesus' human nature, there are actually only two views. The areas of focus will be: The nature of sin; transfer of sin; Jesus' human nature; a biological approach to the incarnation; Jesus' temptation; Jesus' sinlessness; Jesus' resurrection and ascension bodies; and philosophical categories and thought patterns.

#### **14.2 Comparing Sequeira's Post-fall Model with Erickson's Pre-fall Model**

Sequeira's model of Jesus' humanity has some similarities as well as differences with Erickson's. Under the headings below, I will point out both the similarities and the differences.

##### **14.2.1 The Nature of Sin**

This study has revealed that both Sequeira and Erickson have a comprehensive understanding of sin. They both have studied the nature of sin in the OT and NT and concluded that it is a problem that we have all become slaves to. Without external intervention, the human race could not free itself from sin's grip. While recognising the fact that there are several OT and NT terms that describe sin, the two Christologists note that three are particularly mentioned in David's Psalm of penitence: 'Have mercy upon me, o God, according to your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies. Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me' (Ps 51:1-3). The terms used are 'iniquity', 'sin', and 'transgression'. Iniquity is a 'bent toward sin'; sin is 'missing the mark'; transgression is 'lawlessness' or 'breaking of the law'.



Both Sequeira ([1993] 1999:15) and Erickson (2013:571) understand sin to be a tendency that all human beings are born with, as well as an act of disobedience or breaking of God's law. The sin of Adam ruined the entire human race in the sense that we are born with a nature that leans towards wrongdoing. In other words, before one commits an act of sin, one is already a sinner – we are all sinners before we commit any sin.

Both Sequeira and Erickson recognise the fact that we are all conceived in sin. In this light, David acknowledges: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me' (Ps 51:5). He adds: 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies' (Ps 58:3). In Isaiah 48:8, the Bible asserts: 'Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb'.

The sinfulness of sin is shown in Romans 7:13-25, where Paul described the struggle that a born-again person experiences, which struggle is handled maturely when there is a discovery of victory in Jesus through the Holy Spirit (Rom 7:25-8:17). God dealt with this problem of sin through Jesus: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3).

Both Sequeira and Erickson acknowledge the biblical fact that fallen human beings are born in need of a saviour. They need a change of heart in order for them to please God. In this light, David asks God: 'Create in me a clean heart, o God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me' (Ps 51:10). The Saviour Himself said to Nicodemus: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God', and 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:3, 5). This is because of this fact: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). Fallen human beings need the new-birth experience because of this fact: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it' (Jer 17:9).

Both Sequeira and Erickson acknowledge the biblical fact that sin is a universal problem. Sin also has a corporate dimension, which Paul discussed in Romans 5. A sinful nature is something that no fallen human being has escaped. We are all born with a fallen nature.

Based on this understanding of the nature of sin, Sequeira formulates a model of Jesus' humanity that is diametrically different from that of Erickson, as I will show later. In the next section, the transfer of sin, as the two Christologists understand it, will be discussed.

#### **14.2.2 Transfer of Sin**

Related to the nature of sin is the way that sin is transferred from parents to their descendants. Both Sequeira and Erickson suggest that, since the fall of Adam, human beings are born with a fallen nature. This is because all human beings sinned in Adam when Adam sinned (Rom 5:12). God created the entire human race in one person (Acts 17:26). When that person sinned, the entire human race sinned in him. This does not suggest sinning in the sense in which Adam sinned, but simply that the entirety of Adam was affected by sin in such a way that, since he committed sin before he had any children, he could only pass on to his posterity a sinful nature. As a result of Adam's sin, which ruined him, all human beings are born with a damaged image of God. They are all born condemned to die the second death; they are all born devoid of the Holy Spirit. In other words, all human beings are born spiritually dead. Human beings are born depraved. Erickson (2013:689) argues that, if there had not been the 'special sanctifying influence [of the Holy Spirit], he [Jesus] would have possessed the same depraved nature that all have'. This is because all human beings inherit depravity from their parents.

Sequeira and Erickson, however, differ when it comes to the concept of guilt. For Sequeira ([1993] 1999:40), guilt is not legally transferrable (cf. Deut 24:16; 2 Kin 14:6; Ezek 18:1-20). He therefore argues that Adam's descendants do not inherit his guilt (Sequeira 2009:43). The condemnation that is on the fallen human race is not as a result of the race being guilty of Adam's sin, but because of the fact that, when Adam committed sin, and was therefore condemned, he passed on to his descendants a life that was already condemned.

Erickson (2013:580-581), on the other hand, suggests that all fallen human beings inherit Adam's guilt. He is in harmony with Adams (1994:71), who also argues that we inherit sin and guilt from our parents. This is not guilt in the sense of it being something that is as a result of breaking God's law on the part of Adam's descendants, but guilt as imputed to them, because of being related to the natural head of the human race. According to Erickson, we all need to repent of Adam's sin when we reach the age of accountability in order for God to cancel this guilt. However, children who die before the age of accountability will not lose eternity, because God has already taken care of this guilt through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They will enjoy eternal life in much the same way that those who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord will enjoy it. Sequeira and Erickson differ on the human nature of Jesus.

### **14.2.3 Jesus Christ's Human Nature**

In the four books of Sequeira that I have used in this study, he consistently teaches that Jesus assumed the same fallen, sinful human nature that we are all born with. He inherited it from His mother. The difference between Jesus and us is that we *are* human beings, while He *became* a human being. We *are* fallen, sinful human beings, while Jesus *became* a human being with a fallen, sinful human nature. We are conceived in the natural way, while Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. We are human beings, while Jesus is the God-Man. We are born devoid of the Holy Spirit, while Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb. While we have committed sin, Jesus did not commit any sin. Added to this, Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, both spiritually and physically, although He was similar to us as well as different from us. Although Sequeira does not categorically state this, it is implied in his Christological works.

For Erickson, Jesus was the standard humanity. His human nature was spiritually like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin (Erickson 2013:671). Jesus was 'spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified'. On the physical side, Erickson suggests that Jesus assumed the same weak body that we all have. He felt hungry (Matt 4:2) and thirsty (John 19:28), He got tired and slept (Luke 8:23), and He had to grow up in the same way that we grow up (Luke 2:40, 52). Therefore, in Erickson's

view, Jesus spiritually took the nature that Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin, but physically His nature was that which is common to all of us who were born after Adam and Eve fell into sin.

It can be argued, therefore that, while Sequeira holds the view that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, both spiritually and physically, Erickson holds the view that spiritually, Jesus took the nature of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin, and physically He took the same weak nature that we all possess. For Erickson, Jesus' human nature had both the elements (spiritually) of a pre-fall Adam and the elements (physically) of a post-fall Adam. Another aspect I need to consider is the biological approach to the incarnation.

#### **14.2.4 Biological Approach to the Incarnation**

Sequeira and Erickson differ on the aspect of how God brought about the incarnation. For Sequeira (2009:277), it was enough that the Holy Spirit prepared a human body in Mary's womb. He does not explain how God did this. He simply and correctly calls the incarnation a mystery. However, having prepared a body in Mary's womb, God 'united the holy, immortal, divine nature of Jesus to corporate, unredeemed, sinful, mortal human nature' (Sequeira 2009:46). Sequeira is not concerned with the biological processes of human reproduction, because the incarnation was not about these biological processes, but about God becoming a human being while remaining God. The incarnation was about God becoming the God-Man. We are human beings and nothing else. We are born human beings. The incarnation was about someone who had an eternal existence in another form, becoming what He was not by native right (a human), but maintaining what He was by native right (God). He was not two persons in one Person. Instead, He was one Person with two natures. This is the mystery of the incarnation. It cannot be explained in biological terms.

Interestingly, however, Erickson wants to be scientifically and philosophically correct. He is not content to simply accept the angel's explanation to Mary (cf. Luke 1:35). In his view, God had to create a human sperm for the occasion of the incarnation (Erickson

2013:686). He argues that, if Jesus had been created after the genetic pattern of Mary alone, He would have been a clone of her and necessarily female. Thus, Erickson thinks of the incarnation in terms of a mystery which, however, did not bypass the biological processes. The sperm that God created, fertilised Mary's ovum to form a mass of cells that underwent biological processes for nine months. Then, at the end of the nine months, Jesus Christ was born. This is the incarnation as Erickson understands it.

Another important aspect of the human nature of Jesus where Sequeira and Erickson need to be compared and contrasted, is temptation. How was Jesus tempted?

#### **14.2.5 Jesus' Temptation**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews asserted: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15). Both Sequeira and Erickson believe that Jesus was tempted. However, they differ in terms of how Jesus was tempted.

It is Sequeira's contention that Jesus was tempted in much the same way that born-again fallen, sinful human beings are tempted (Sequeira 1996:179). This means that Jesus was tempted from the same flesh as we are (James 1:14). This is because, in his view, Jesus assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that He had found. If Jesus had not been tempted as we are tempted, He would not have been a sympathising High Priest that the Bible claims He is. There is a big difference between being tempted in an unfallen human nature and being tempted in a fallen, sinful human nature. The pre-fall Adam was tempted in a nature that was in harmony with God's law of love. Born-again fallen, sinful human beings are tempted in a nature that is not in harmony with the law of love. Therefore, if Jesus had been tempted in an unfallen human nature, He would have been an example to the unfallen Adam, and not to fallen, sinful human beings. In fact, if Jesus had been tempted in an unfallen human nature, His temptations would have been less severe than those experienced by born-again fallen, sinful human beings, since His nature would have been in harmony with the law of love. However, the intensity of Jesus' temptations, especially in Gethsemane, suggests that He was tempted in the fallen, sinful human

nature that He had assumed (cf. Heb 5:5-11). Sequeira admits that Jesus' temptations were more intense than those that born-again fallen, sinful human beings experience, because He was sinless in performance. Apart from that, Jesus had an inherent divinity, which He could have easily appealed to, to advantage Himself. The fact that He was conscious of His inherent divine power, made His temptations more difficult to overcome, but again, this was because He had assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. In an unfallen human nature, it would have been easier for Him to overcome temptation, even though He was aware of His inherent divine power.

Erickson (2013:546) is of the view that Jesus was tempted to fulfil His legitimate desires, for example, the desire to eat when He was hungry; the desire to get this world back to God; and the desire to come down safely from the pinnacle of the temple. In Erickson's opinion, these temptations were on the point of fulfilling these desires in an illegitimate way. Jesus had entered into a covenant with the Holy Trinity to live His life in harmony with the Holy Trinity's will. As a human being, He was to live His life dependent on the power from above. Anything He would do to advantage Himself, independent of the Holy Trinity's will, would be sin. What should be noted is that, in Erickson's view, Jesus did not get tempted from a flesh that was dominated by the law of sin, for He took the spiritual nature of an unfallen Adam. Accordingly, James 1:13-15 does not apply to Jesus. In fact, Erickson distinguishes Jesus' temptation from ours, as he argues: 'For those of us who live after the fall and are not Jesus, there is a further complicating factor' (Erickson 2013:546) – this 'complicating factor' is something called the 'flesh'. This 'flesh' is 'the self-centred life, denial or rejection of God'. This is what Paul discussed in Romans 7:13-25, which makes holy living without the power of the Holy Spirit impossible. The flesh opposes the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-24). This, according Erickson, only applies to born-again fallen, sinful human beings – not to Jesus, for He did not assume a fallen, sinful human nature. The intensity of Jesus' temptations was due to the fact that He did not succumb to temptation (Erickson 2013:656-657).

The point to note is that, while Sequeira holds the belief that Jesus was tempted in the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed, Erickson opines that Jesus was tempted in

an unfallen spiritual nature, which He took at the incarnation. While, for Sequeira, James 1:14 applies to Jesus, Erickson suggests that James 1:14 does not apply to Jesus. Both Sequeira and Erickson take Jesus' temptations to have been very real and intense. The temptations of Jesus were more intense than those that born-again fallen, sinful human beings will ever experience. Generally, Sequeira and Erickson differ on this point, as I have shown above. Related to the concept of Jesus' temptation, is the concept of His sinlessness.

#### **14.2.6 Jesus Christ's Sinlessness**

As it has been shown in this study, Sequeira believes that Jesus assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that He found. This means that Jesus' human nature was not inherently sinless. Sequeira (1996:41) argues: 'The humanity Jesus assumed really was our corporate humanity that needed redeeming'. Jesus' humanity was 'a humanity which was identical to our sinful humanity' (Sequeira 1996:101). Apart from that, Jesus lived a perfect life (Heb 4:15). Sequeira believes that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb. His sinlessness was in His divine nature as well as in His performance – not in His human nature. Jesus' human nature only became sinless through the resurrection, where the law of sin or tendency toward sin was removed from His nature. Sequeira (2009:47) suggests that, in raising Jesus, God 'also raised humanity in Him, totally cured from the effects of the Fall and the sin problem'. In case this is not clear enough, He asserts: 'Christ took a glorified body to heaven, fully redeemed from the effects of sin, and all who accept Him by faith will receive the same' (Sequeira 2009:48). It is noteworthy that, in Sequeira's opinion, it was the humanity that Jesus assumed that was 'fully redeemed from the effects of sin'.

In contrast, Erickson believes that Jesus took upon His divine nature, a sinless spiritual human nature. This was made possible by the special sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit at the time of the incarnation (Erickson 2013:689). This means that, in Erickson's opinion, Jesus' human nature was inherently sinless. It was spiritually like the nature that Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin. Jesus' human nature did not have the tendency to sin that the fallen, sinful human beings have. However, Erickson also believes that Jesus'

sinlessness was due to His obedient performance. He perfectly obeyed God's law and hence maintained His sinlessness throughout His life. On this point, Erickson is in harmony with Sequeira.

What should be stressed is that Sequeira believes that Jesus' sinlessness was not in His human nature, but in His performance, whereas Erickson is of the opinion that Jesus' sinlessness was in both His human nature as well as in His performance. In Sequeira's view, the Holy Spirit did not prevent a transmission of sin as a tendency from Mary to Jesus, while in Erickson's opinion, the Holy Spirit prevented a transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus. Sequeira and Erickson also differ in opinion on the aspect of Jesus' resurrection and ascension body.

#### **14.2.7 Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension Body**

In Sequeira's view, Jesus' pre-resurrection body was different from His resurrection body. As noted above, Jesus assumed the fallen, sinful human nature both spiritually and physically. Spiritually, Jesus' human nature needed to be changed through His resurrection, because it was this very fallen, sinful human nature that was unable to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus' spiritual human nature needed to have the law of sin removed from it through His death on the cross and the resurrection. In this light, Sequeira (2009:48) asserts: 'Christ took a glorified body to heaven, fully redeemed from the effects of sin, and all who accept Him by faith will receive the same'. He opines: 'Only the resurrected life of Christ, God's supreme gift to mankind, could enter heaven' (Sequeira 2009:160). It is Sequeira's contention that 'in Christ, that same humanity [humanity defiled and marred and no longer fit for God's indwelling] was redeemed to God, and cleansed' (Sequeira 2009:281). The point to note here is that, at the incarnation, Christ assumed the same humanity that was 'defiled and marred and no longer fit for God's indwelling', but in His case, He was indwelt by the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb.

In Sequeira's view, Jesus' resurrection body was the same body that ascended to heaven. Jesus did not undergo a further metamorphosis at His ascension. He went to heaven with a resurrected and glorified body and will descend from heaven in the same



body (Acts 1:11; 1 John 3:2). Paul claimed: 'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself' (Phil 3:20-21). This is how Sequeira understands the nature of Jesus' resurrection and ascension body. Jesus' resurrection body was a spiritual body with flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). It would appear that in Sequeira's view, a spiritual body is simply the body that Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin. It is a body indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

It is important to note that, while Sequeira does not distinguish Jesus' resurrection body from His ascension body, Erickson distinguishes the two bodies. According to Erickson (2013:710), Jesus' resurrection body 'was yet to become the "spiritual body" of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15:44' (Erickson 2013:710). In Erickson's view, Jesus' resurrection body could not enter heaven in the form in which it was as He still needed to undergo a spiritual metamorphosis. In this light, Erickson (2013:711) asserts: 'At that time [the time of ascension] Jesus underwent the remainder of the metamorphosis begun with the resurrection of his body'. He contends that Jesus' ascension body is the type we will have after our resurrection. It is a perfect, glorified humanity, which continues to be united with the deity. It will naturally exceed what we will ultimately be. Finally, Sequeira and Erickson move from different directions in their formulation of Jesus' human nature, although they both desire to have a model of Jesus' humanity that adequately resolves the sin problem. I will discuss this in what follows.

#### **14.2.8 Philosophical Categories and Thought Patterns**

It is important to ask about the philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced the formulation of the two Christological models I have compared and contrasted. In other words, which thought patterns influenced Sequeira and Erickson to formulate the two diametrically different models of Jesus' human nature?

Sequeira's concern is the resolution of the sin problem. He argues: 'The gospel becomes meaningful, then, only against the background of a full understanding of sin' (Sequeira

[1993] 1999:11). Even the title of his principal work on the human nature of Jesus, states something regarding his thought pattern. The title of the book is *Saviour of the World: The humanity of Christ in the light of the everlasting gospel*. In Sequeira's principal work on soteriology, he discusses both hamartiology and Christology. The title of the book is *Beyond Belief: The promise, the power, and the reality of the everlasting gospel*. Sequeira suggests that hamartiology, soteriology, and Christology are interrelated. As such, hamartiology informs Christology, while both hamartiology and Christology inform soteriology. Sequeira (1996:9) observes: 'Because the issue of Christ's human nature is so closely intertwined with implications for our salvation, it is imperative that we study one in the light of the other'. In his view, this 'is the only way we will ever come to a correct biblical consensus on the human nature of Christ' (Sequeira 1996:9).

What, therefore, is Sequeira's line of thought? Human beings have sinned. Sin is both a tendency, and an act of disobedience. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). God loves human beings so much that, even before the human beings were created, He devised a plan to save them by becoming their substitute (Rev 13:8; John 1:29). The law of substitution requires that the substitute must be related to the one to be substituted, for it is illegal for one who is not related to the sinner to be punished in the place of the sinner (cf. Deut 24:16; 2 Kin 14:6; Ezek 18:1-20). The substitute must be one who will deal with the dual problem of sin, once and for all. God is related to the sinner in the sense that He created human beings, but while He has the authority to save the sinner, He cannot be the sinner's substitute, because He is not a human being. Therefore, God had to be incarnated. Sin as a tendency had to be dealt with in the fallen flesh in which it dwells. Sin as an act of disobedience had to be placed on the substitute. Therefore, God assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, for it is in this nature in which sin as a tendency, dwells. The substitute had to obey God in a fallen, sinful human nature and have this nature destroyed through His substitutionary death. Sin as an act of disobedience needed to be laid on Jesus as the sinner's substitute. The law of sin, which according to Sequeira, was assumed by Jesus, was destroyed on the cross and removed through Jesus' resurrection.

Sequeira also thinks of the incarnation in terms of temptation, the concept of Jesus as an example to believers, and Jesus' priesthood. In His view, only a substitute who assumed a fallen, sinful human nature qualified to be the believer's example in overcoming temptation, and sympathising with the believer as High Priest. This substitute had to be sinless, not only in His human nature (human nature by native right), but also in performance. Therefore, Jesus was not a sinner, even though He assumed a sinner's nature, because He just *assumed* what was not His by native right. There was no way Jesus would have had a sinless human nature by native right, because He does not belong to the realm of humans like the rest of us, but to the realm of God. Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature in order to redeem it and cleanse it of all sin. This is Sequeira's line of thought, his philosophical thinking. He moves from hamartiology to Christology. His principal concern is the salvation of fallen, sinful human beings.

I must also add that Sequeira critically considers the law of heredity as it applies to all the descendants of Adam. While he does not think about the transfer of sin as a tendency from the parents to children from a genetic perspective, he takes the position that, by partaking of Mary's human nature, Jesus received the very fallen, sinful nature that belonged to Mary, which she inherited from her parents, going back to Adam. Children inherit both the tendency to sin, and a weak physical nature from their parents. Jesus did not escape this. This was part of God's plan for the salvation of the human race.

Erickson's line of thought is quite different from Sequeira's. While he is equally concerned about the problem of sin, when it comes to the human nature that Jesus assumed, his concern is the preservation of Jesus' sinlessness. Human beings are sinners by nature, as well as by an act of disobedience. If God assumes a fallen, sinful human nature, He would be a sinner by nature, in need of salvation. Since God knew that the second Person of the Godhead would be incarnated, He created human beings in His image. In this light, Erickson (2013:672) argues: 'It is quite possible that part of God's purpose in making humanity in his own image was to facilitate the incarnation that would someday take place'. Thus, when we think about Jesus Christ, we should think about Him in terms of the original nature of human beings, and not in terms of our fallen, sinful human nature.

We should not examine our fallen, sinful human nature and then conclude that Jesus assumed that same nature. Instead, we should examine the human nature of Jesus, ‘for [Jesus] most fully reveals the true nature of humanity’ (Erickson 2013:671). We are not true humanity – we are impaired, broken-down vestiges of essential humanity. Jesus’ humanity was certainly more compatible with the deity than the type of humanity that we now observe. Jesus’ humanity was that which was possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall – it was the standard humanity.

It is Erickson’s contention that we must begin with the incarnation itself – it was a reality – it took place. He is on this point in harmony with Barth (1960:46-47), who postulates: ‘If, however, we begin with the reality of the incarnation in Jesus Christ, we not only see better what the two natures are like, but recognize that whatever they are, they are not incompatible, for they once did coexist in one person’.

In Erickson’s opinion, the fallen, sinful human beings must not be our starting point when we think about the incarnation. We must go to the Bible and start with the incarnation itself – it took place. Thus, in Erickson’s view, Christology must inform soteriology. Hamartiology does not inform Christology – if it does, it is from the opposite direction. A sinless substitute in nature dealt with the sin problem through His substitutionary death. It was not a substitute who assumed a fallen, sinful human nature who dealt with the sin problem. Thus, Erickson’s model of Jesus’ humanity is completely in opposition to Sequeira’s. While Sequeira’s model of Jesus’ human nature gives a clear picture of how Jesus’ *Person* and *work* dealt with the dual problem of sin, Erickson’s model is only clear when it comes to the idea of substitution, in which our sins were laid on the sinless Jesus. There are similarities and differences in Sequeira’s and Gulley’s Christological models. In what follows, I will discuss it.

### **14.3 Comparing Sequeira’s Post-fall Model with Gulley’s ‘Neither Pre-fall nor Post-fall’ Model**

As I begin this comparison of Sequeira’s and Gulley’s models of Jesus’ human nature, it is important that I reiterate that both of these Christologists are Seventh-day Adventists.

The similarities in their views may reflect this fact. The differences definitely point to the Christological controversies that have divided SDA Christology since the 1950s.

### **14.3.1 The Nature of Sin**

This study has revealed that both Sequeira and Gulley hold a comprehensive view of the nature of sin. They both argue that sin is a tendency as well as an act of disobedience. Before we sin, we are already sinners by nature. We are born in need of redemption. Sin is our state of alienation from God, which we are born with. Adam was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), but when he disobeyed God, the image of God in him was to a great extent marred. All Adam's descendants are born with a marred image. In fact, the Bible relates that Adam's son, Seth was in his image: 'And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth' (Gen 5:3). The image of God in the pre-fall Adam included selfless love. Before they fell into sin, Adam and Eve reflected God's image. They loved God supremely and enjoyed being in His presence, but when they distrusted God, thereby disobeying Him, they no longer desired to be in His presence. They started to hide from Him (Gen 3:1-10).

Both Sequeira and Gulley believe that sin is living life independent of God. Sin is saying NO to God, and YES to Satan. Sin is replacing God in our lives with something other than God. Sin is breaking the relationship that exists between God and us. All human beings are born already in a broken relationship. Gulley (2012:434) argues that 'sin, whether in nature or acts, participates in a broken relationship with God'.

As I have already noted, Gulley and Sequeira are generally in agreement when it comes to the nature of sin. Therefore, it suffices simply to reiterate that they both hold the view that sin is a tendency as well as an act of disobedience. However, what do they say about the transfer of sin?

### **14.3.2 Transfer of Sin**

The transfer of sin is another area where Sequeira and Gulley agree. Sin in nature is passed on from parents to their children. Since I have discussed Sequeira's view of how

sin is transferred when I was comparing his view with Erickson's, it will suffice to only discuss Gulley's view. Commenting on Romans 5:17-19, Gulley (2012:430) asserts: 'Adam's sin is passed on through his children so that each is born with a sinful nature'. What this means is that 'all humans are born with a propensity to sin because all humans inherit a sinful nature due to the first sin of Adam' (Gulley 2012:430). Sin as nature or a tendency, or leaning, or a propensity, gets to us from Adam by inheritance. What this means is that each person is born with the need of salvation before they ever sin. It must be pointed out, however, that, in Sequeira's and Gulley's view, Adam's actual sin of disobedience is not transferrable. In other words, Adam's guilt is not our guilt. We are not responsible for Adam's sin. Our children are not responsible for our sins (Ezek 18:1-20).

### **14.3.3 Jesus Christ's Human Nature**

While Sequeira and Gulley agree on the nature of sin and the way it is transferred, they differ on the nature of Jesus' humanity. Sequeira holds the view that Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature both spiritually and physically. I already discussed this when comparing his Christological model with Erickson's. It will suffice therefore to simply state that Sequeira is a post-fall Christologist.

Gulley, on the other hand, holds the view that Jesus' human nature was neither that of a pre-fall Adam nor that of a post-fall Adam: 'It is more correct to say that Jesus' human nature possessed aspects of both the pre-fall and post-fall human nature' (Gulley 2012: 433). He argues that 'Christ took upon Himself a human nature that was weakened by a long heredity of sin, even though He did not actually sin' (Gulley 2012:434). Gulley further argues that God assumed a human nature with its 'damaged image of God, even though He did not take its depravity' (Gulley 2012:434). When evaluating Gulley's Christology, I noted that, by 'damaged image of God', which God assumed at the incarnation, Gulley is referring to our weak physical nature and not to our spiritual nature. I therefore concluded that Gulley does not believe that God assumed the spiritual nature of a post-fall Adam. He asserts that '[Jesus] identified with fallen human nature in every way except in sin in nature and life' (Gulley 2012:435). The post-fall aspects of human nature that Gulley believes that God had assumed at the incarnation include getting tired; needing sleep;

getting hungry; and others. It is Gulley's contention that spiritually, God assumed the nature of a pre-fall Adam, while physically, He assumed the nature of a post-fall Adam. He argues that '[Jesus] is not to be identified fully with either the pre-fall or post-fall views of human nature' (Gulley 2012:434). He makes this statement in the context of his evaluation of Dederen's Christological view found in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. The implication of this is that he supports Dederen's Christological view, which is held by many SDA theologians.

What then is Gulley's model of Jesus' human nature? Gulley (2012:433) responds: 'Christ is neither like the pre-fall Adam nor like the post-fall human race'. However, Gulley makes a statement that suggests that he is a pre-fall Christologist: 'The meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' (Gulley 2012:433). Since he omits 'the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' from Jesus' nature, it follows that he is a pre-fall Christologist.

The point to note for the purpose of this study is that, while Sequeira is a post-fall Christologist, Gulley is a pre-fall Christologist. However, Gulley does not identify himself as a pre-fall Christologist. When comparing his Christological model with that of Erickson, I will contend that there is actually no strict pre-fall position of Jesus' human nature.

#### **14.3.4 Biological Approach to the Incarnation**

Both Sequeira and Gulley have not ventured into the biological processes that take place when a human being is formed. In fact, they do not discuss the issue of Jesus' sex, as it is not important for salvation. Indeed, Jesus was Mary's Son (Matt 1:21), which means that He was male. However, it is not Jesus' maleness that matters in salvation. Therefore, Sequeira and Gulley do not trouble themselves to argue for a philosophically acceptable position with respect to how God was able to bring about the conception in Mary's womb of a male human being without the involvement of the male seed. The incarnation is a mystery. Both Sequeira and Gulley are content to leave it where they find it in God's word: 'And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His

people from their sins' (Matt 1:21); and 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). The mystery of the incarnation is that the second Person of the Godhead became both the Son of God and the Son of Man. This appears to be what really matters to both Sequeira and Gulley.

#### **14.3.5 Jesus Christ's Temptation**

With respect to Jesus' temptation, Sequeira and Gulley disagree. The disagreement results from the fact that they hold conflicting views on the human nature of Jesus. Since Sequeira holds the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, which includes the propensity, or drive, or tendency, or leaning toward sin, he believes that Jesus was tempted just as born-again fallen, sinful human beings are tempted (cf. Heb 4:15). This means that James' statement in James 1:14-15 applied to Jesus, the only difference being that Jesus did not succumb to the enticement to sin, which came from the fallen, sinful nature He assumed. Sequeira (2009:109) contends that the human nature that God assumed at the incarnation 'was dominated by the law of sin (Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:15)'. He does not mean that Jesus sinned, but that the law of sin that all human beings are born with, was also in Jesus' flesh. Satan's enticements appealed to this tendency toward sin, which was in Jesus' flesh, but Jesus said NO at every point of His earthly life. Therefore, for Sequeira, Jesus' temptation came from within as well as from outside. From whichever direction temptation came to Jesus, He emerged victorious. Indeed, in the fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus assumed, He struggled with temptation to the extent that, if it would not be sin for Him to do so, He would have appealed to His inherent divine power. The fact that He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature and that He had inherent divine power within Him, temptation was harder to resist than it will ever be for any of the fallen, sinful human beings. The fact that He continued to rely on the external divine power of God was Jesus' hardest test of loyalty to His Father. How does Gulley view Jesus' temptation?

Gulley's view of Jesus' temptation is in direct opposition to Sequeira's. This is because of the fact that He holds a view that omits the tendency to sin from Jesus' human nature. He argues: 'His struggle was not over internal propensities but internal divinity. His difference



from us rather than sameness to us made the struggle genuine' (Gulley 2012:432-433). Since, in Gulley's view, Jesus assumed the spiritual nature of a pre-fall Adam, He received temptation in much the same way that the pre-fall Adam experienced temptation. However, Jesus' temptation was more intense than what the pre-fall Adam experienced, because of the purity of His life. Apart from that, He was also divine – therefore, He could easily have appealed to His inherent divine power. Gulley (2012:456) concludes: 'So Christ's uniqueness, not His identity with us, gave Him a disadvantage in temptations and gave us the advantage of a sinless Saviour, who could live and die as our substitute'.

It is Gulley's contention that, what James said in James 1:14-15 did not apply to Jesus. He interprets Hebrews 4:15 to mean that Jesus was tempted in the same way that human nature is tempted – that is the way in which Adam was tempted before He fell into sin. Adam was tempted to say NO to God, and YES to Satan. He was tempted to replace God with something other than God. He was tempted to distrust God first and then say NO to Him. This is the way that Jesus was tempted, as His struggle in Gethsemane suggests (Matt 26:36-46).

In conclusion, I want to assert that, while Sequeira argues that Jesus' temptation came from within as well as from outside, Gulley suggests that Jesus' temptations only came from outside. While Sequeira opines that Satan appealed to the sinful desires of the flesh that were in the fallen, sinful human nature that Jesus assumed, Gulley argues that there was no tendency to sin in Jesus' human nature to which Satan could appeal. While, in Sequeira's view, Jesus struggled with temptation in the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed, and because of His inherent divine power, Gulley opines that Jesus struggled with the temptation to stop depending on the external divine power and depend on His inherent divine power, but in an unfallen spiritual human nature. While Sequeira suggests that Jesus' struggle with temptation was because of having a human nature identical to ours, Gulley asserts that Jesus' uniqueness, and not sameness, made His struggle with temptation genuine. Thus, Sequeira's and Gulley's views of Jesus' temptation are diametrically different. This is because they hold conflicting views of Jesus' human nature.

### **14.3.6 Jesus Christ's Sinlessness**

When comparing Sequeira's Christology with Erickson's, I noted that he argues that Jesus' sinlessness was in His performance and not in His human nature. The human nature that Jesus assumed at the incarnation was the very one He found.

On the other hand, Gulley argues that Jesus was sinless in His human nature as well as in performance. He argues that 'He identified with fallen human nature in every way except in sin in nature and life' (Gulley 2012:435). In Gulley's view, sin as nature did not pass on to Jesus, because He was immaculately conceived in Mary's womb (Gulley 2012:428). Gulley observes that, contrary to the Roman Catholic claim that Mary was immaculately conceived in order for Jesus to be born without sin in a human nature, it was Jesus who was immaculately conceived. Gulley quotes Luke 1:35: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born shall be called the Son of God'. Interestingly, Gulley states: 'Christ was already the holy one before leaving heaven' (Gulley 2012:428) – this, in my view, is a reference to Jesus' divinity. But the way Gulley puts it, suggests that he is of the view that the work of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus, for there is no better way to explain his view that Jesus was sinless in nature, unless, by 'nature' he means His divine nature, which as I have noted above is actually the case. We cannot talk about a holy human nature of Jesus before His incarnation, because He only had a human nature after He was incarnated. But we can talk about a holy divine nature, which is always His by native right. After the incarnation, we can talk about the holy Jesus as the God-Man. He was holy as the God-Man.

Therefore, while Sequeira argues that Jesus was only sinless in performance, Gulley opines that Jesus was sinless in both His human nature and performance. The reason for this difference is that Sequeira holds a conflicting view of Jesus' human nature compared to Gulley.

### **14.3.7 Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension Body**

This is another area where Sequeira and Gulley differ in opinion. When comparing their Christological views, I stated that it is Sequeira's contention that Jesus' pre-resurrection body was different from His resurrection body in the sense that His pre-resurrection body was dominated by the law of sin, while His resurrection body had the law of sin removed from it. In other words, since Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature – a nature, which leans toward sin, that nature had to be cleansed of sin. Sequeira reminds his readers that the humanity that Jesus assumed was our humanity and therefore it had to be purged of all sin through the cross. That nature then needed to be glorified through the resurrection. Thus, Jesus rose from the grave with a glorified body.

In Sequeira's opinion, Jesus' resurrection body was the same body with which He ascended to heaven. It was with flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), it was a body the disciples were invited to touch – a physical body, and yet, it could be a spiritual body in the sense that all limitations had been removed from it. It was the body that Adam and Eve had when they were created and before they fell into sin – a body we will have when we are resurrected or translated to heaven (cf. 1 Cor 15:50-56; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2).

Since Gulley holds the pre-fall nature position of Jesus, he has a different view of Jesus' resurrection body. He opines that Jesus' body did not have to undergo any change through the resurrection, because it was not corruptible. It is his contention that 'no biblical verse speaks of Jesus' need for either the new birth or a change of nature at His resurrection' (Gulley 2012:435). When I evaluated Gulley's Christological model, I agreed with him that Jesus did not need to experience the new birth. However, I noted that His argument that Jesus did not have His nature changed at His resurrection is an argument from silence. This argument is a direct result of Gulley's belief that Jesus did not identify with us 'in sin in nature'. For, if Jesus did not identify with the fallen, sinful humanity in nature, what was the need for a change of nature at the resurrection? Therefore, while Gulley appears to support his argument using the silence of the NT, at the back of his mind he has his pre-fall model which does not admit to sin in Jesus' human nature.

Gulley (2012:471-472) makes this interesting statement:

There is a bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of resurrection. Christ didn't need to be changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility, or from mortality to immortality, for He was sinless and divine (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) throughout His life on earth, and thus different from all His followers who will be raised at His second advent (1 Cor.15:50-57; 1 Thess. 4:16-18).

It can therefore be argued that, in Gulley's view, the body with which Jesus went to Calvary's cross did not undergo any change at the resurrection. It did not get changed from mortality to immortality, or from corruptibility to incorruptibility. This is because Jesus was sinless and divine.

It is interesting that Gulley makes another statement that appears to be in conflict with the one above. He argues that Jesus 'was a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature; for God alone is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16)' (Gulley 2012:467). I discussed this conflict when evaluating Gulley's view of Jesus' human nature. I then asked the question: If Jesus was a union of an immortal divine nature and a mortal human nature, did His mortal human nature not need to be changed from mortality to immortality? As Gulley suggests that Jesus assumed some aspects of a post-fall human nature (Gulley 2012:433), did He not need to have those aspects removed from His nature? After the resurrection, did Jesus still have the problems of getting tired, needing sleep, getting hungry and thirsty, and others? Gulley correctly opines that Jesus' divinity was quiescent in Mary's womb as well as at the cross. Jesus experienced death because our sins were laid on Him, while His divinity did not act to prevent death, for it was part of God's plan that Jesus' divinity should be quiescent at the cross. Jesus' divinity remained quiescent in the grave until the time of the resurrection (Gulley 2012:470). It is Gulley's contention that Jesus acted as God in His incarnation and in His resurrection, but not in His interim human life. Naturally, this is a complex issue and beyond the scope of this study. The point I want to make is that Gulley's view of Jesus' resurrection body in relation to His Calvary body is ambiguous.

However, I must point out that Gulley believes that Jesus went to heaven in His resurrection body. After the resurrection, Jesus did not undergo any change. Jesus' resurrection body, which was also His ascension body, could be touched. Thomas could put his hand into His crucifixion scars (John 20:24-28); Mary of Magdala could cling to Him (John 20:17); the two Marys could clasp His feet (Matt 28:8-10); and Jesus could take bread, break it, and give it to two disciples (Luke 24:30). These events indicate that Jesus' resurrection body was physical – He was not a disembodied entity.

To conclude, I want to reiterate that Sequeira and Gulley hold conflicting views of Jesus' resurrection body. The reason for this is that they hold conflicting views of His human nature. In what follows, I will discuss philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced the formulation of the Christological models that Sequeira and Gulley espouse.

#### **14.3.8 Philosophical Categories and Thought Patterns**

Sequeira's major concern is the resolution of the dual problem of sin. How does God resolve the sin problem? How does God save human beings? As I noted when comparing Sequeira's and Erickson's Christological models, it is Sequeira's contention that God needed to assume a kind of human nature that would qualify Him to be the fallen humanity's substitute. God needed to condemn sin as nature in the very nature in which it dwelt. The incarnational nature of Jesus had to be such that He qualified to be the fallen humanity's example in overcoming temptation and suffering. God had to assume a human nature that qualified Him to be the fallen humanity's High Priest. In Sequeira's opinion, a Jesus who qualified in all these aspects was the one who assumed the post-fall human nature. Naturally such a Jesus had to be unique – and His uniqueness was not in not having sin in nature, but in not committing sin. His uniqueness was in being the God-Man. His uniqueness was in the fact that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb.

It must be reiterated that Sequeira moves from hamartiology to Christology – His concern being the salvation of the fallen, sinful human beings. While he recognises the fact that the fallen, sinful human beings are born in need of a saviour, he argues that, even though

Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, He did not need a saviour, because the human nature that He assumed, was not His by native right. He assumed it simply to redeem it and cleanse it of all sin. Jesus did not need a saviour, because He did not commit any sin. This is Sequeira's line of thinking.

Interestingly, Gulley is also concerned about the resolution of sin, which ultimately brings about the salvation of the fallen, sinful human beings. He is equally concerned about preserving the sinlessness of Jesus, stating: 'God's mission must determine the extent of His identity with fallen human nature' (Gulley 2012:435). Commenting on 1 John 3:5, he observes: 'This verse speaks of Christ's sinless nature in His mission to save humans from their sinful natures, for sin issues out of a nature of sin, the nature in which every human is born since the Fall' (Gulley 2012:435). Since Jesus came to save humans from their sinful nature and sinful acts, He was necessarily sinless in nature and in acts. Sin, whether in nature or acts, participates in a broken relationship with God. Jesus did not come to participate in that broken relationship, but to restore it. Jesus did not cross the chasm to become a party to the sin problem – but to solve it. Had He assumed the fallen, sinful human nature, He would Himself have needed a saviour and thus disqualified to be our substitute. This is Gulley's way of reasoning with respect to the issue of the resolution of the problem of sin.

Like Sequeira, Gulley moves from hamartiology to Christology, but from the opposite direction. While Sequeira suggests that the problem of sin could only be resolved by God assuming the very fallen, sinful human nature that was in existence at the incarnation, Gulley opines that the problem of sin could only be resolved by God assuming a human nature free of sin. They both have God's mission in mind when formulating their Christological models. However, they hold conflicting views when it comes to the aspect of how God fulfilled His mission. They are both concerned about Jesus being an example in overcoming temptation and suffering, they are both concerned about Jesus being a sympathetic High Priest, but they look at these aspects of Christology from opposite directions.

To conclude, it is obvious that Sequeira and Gulley represent two conflicting Adventist views of Jesus' human nature. The two views are irreconcilable. An attempt to reconcile them is an attempt in futility. In fact, it would appear that Gulley's current view of Jesus' human nature, which I have evaluated in this study, resulted from his attempt to reconcile some aspects of the pre-fall and the post-fall models. The end result is a model that, in my view, is in conflict with Scripture. Gulley's model suggests that Jesus had three natures – a divine nature, a pre-fall spiritual nature, and a post-fall physical nature, although the Bible only speaks of a divine nature and a human nature. Sequeira's model seems to be in harmony with the data presented in the NT. I noted, however, that it needs to be revised. In what follows, I will compare and contrast the Christological models of Gulley and Erickson.

#### **14.4 Comparing Gulley's 'Neither Pre-fall nor Post-fall' Model with Erickson's Pre-fall Model**

One of my aims at the beginning of this study was to reconcile Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature with Gulley's. I hope to achieve this by comparing these models.

##### **14.4.1 The Nature of Sin**

Generally, both Gulley and Erickson hold a comprehensive view of the nature of sin. Both of them argue that sin is a tendency, or propensity, or drive, or leaning, which we all inherit from our parents, and an act of disobedience. In other words, they both argue that sin created a dual problem for all the people born after Adam's fall. All human beings, except Jesus, are born in need of a saviour. I have already discussed Gulley's and Erickson's views of the nature of sin. It suffices, therefore, to simply reiterate that the two scholars are in agreement, but what do they say about how sin is transferred from parents to their children?

##### **14.4.2 Transfer of Sin**

With respect to the concept of the transfer of sin, Gulley and Erickson only partly agree. Both of them believe that, when Adam committed sin, he ruined the entire human race to the extent that, since he had no children by the time he sinned and he only started having

children after his fall, all his descendants are born with a human nature that is inherently sinful. In other words, all human beings born after Adam's fall are born, already in need of a saviour. They are born sinners. The very fallen, sinful life of Adam is what his descendants receive. This concept has already been discussed above.

However, Gulley and Erickson disagree when it comes to the inheritance of guilt. While Gulley (2012:157) argues that guilt is not transferrable, Erickson (2013:581) opines that the fallen, sinful human beings inherit the guilt of Adam, which is only cancelled when they reach the age of responsibility and accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord. It is Erickson's contention that children who die before reaching the age of responsibility will still enjoy eternal life, since God took care of their guilt through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Erickson 2013:581). There are similarities in Gulley's and Erickson's models of Jesus' human nature. Since one of my aims is to reconcile the Christological models of these two Christologists, I will take considerable space to discuss Jesus' human nature.

#### **14.4.3 Jesus Christ's Human Nature**

It has been pointed out above that Gulley believes that Jesus' human nature was 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall', for He had some aspects of the pre-fall Adam and some of the post-fall Adam. In other words, Jesus had a unique human nature. The evaluation I did of Gulley's model of Jesus' human nature, revealed that he believes that Jesus has assumed the spiritual nature of the pre-fall Adam, and the physical nature of the post-fall Adam.

Gulley (2012:433) then makes this insightful statement: 'The meaning of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall* represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam'. Since he omits propensities and drives from Jesus' human nature, it can be argued that his model is pre-fall. His statement suggests that, in categorising Christological models into either pre-fall or post-fall, it is the spiritual aspect that is important, for 'propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' (Gulley 2012:433), refer to the spiritual aspect of life. Thus, it is quite misleading to argue for a



'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature while, at the same time omitting 'propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' from Jesus' human nature. I therefore propose that Gulley should simply admit that he espouses the pre-fall view of Jesus' human nature. Thus, Zurcher (1999:222-224) is correct when he categorises Gulley as a pre-fall Christologist.

Since I stated that, in evaluating Gulley's Christological model, I would actually be evaluating the view found in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000), and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005), I will make some comments to support my conclusion that the Christological model proposed in the two books is a pre-fall model and not what the authors of these books claim.

The Christological model promoted in the two books in question is actually the one that Gulley espouses. Therefore, since the model in the two books omits 'propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam' from Jesus' human nature, it is a pre-fall model. Some prominent supporters of this Christological model are Dederen, Webster, and Adams. Dederen actually authored the article in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* which discusses Jesus' human nature. In fact, a good number of SDA theologians who hold the 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature learned it from Dederen, who learned it from Heppenstall.

Since *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, and *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, are semi-official SDA books (they were not authorised by the SDA Church in session), to a great extent, it can be argued that the current SDA Christological position is pre-fall. This means that, even though in theory the SDA Church claims to have no position on the specific human nature of Jesus, the two books in question betray the church. The so-called alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature is actually a pre-fall model.

There are also claims suggesting that the alternative, or unique, or ‘neither pre-fall nor post-fall’ model is actually post-fall. This is in harmony with Gulley’s definition of the terms *pre-fall* and *post-fall*. Adams claims that the post-fall view of Jesus’ human nature is an elementary truth to most, if not all Adventists. He asserts: ‘We believe – and have always believed – that Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings!’ (Adams 1994:27). He does not see any reason why people should expend so much time and effort defending this position. Whatever might have been Adams’ motive in making this statement – it reflects the truth about what Adventists have believed and taught throughout their history. Adventists have always believed and taught that ‘Christ did take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen human beings!’

It is Adams’ observation that there is no direct prelapsarian statement from a contemporary Adventist (Adams 1994:27). This statement suggests that contemporary Adventists do not (or no longer) teach the prelapsarian view of Jesus’ human nature. It is important to note, however, that Gulley (2012:433) states: ‘The meaning of the terms *pre-fall* [prelapsarian] and *post-fall* [postlapsarian] represent the omission or inclusion of the propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam’. This being the case then, it follows that the so-called alternative, or unique, or ‘neither pre-fall nor post-fall’ model of Jesus’ human nature is prelapsarian, since it omits the ‘propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam’. This means that Adams’ claim is not completely true. There are quite many contemporary Adventists who believe and teach the prelapsarian view of Jesus’ human nature. For example, Dederen, Adams, and Gulley, to mention a few, are actually prelapsarian Christologists, since their model of Jesus’ human nature omits ‘propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam’.

Weber (1994:73) argues: ‘The fact is that Jesus, as the last Adam, overcame where the first Adam fell – in sinless flesh’. Read out of context, this statement would be taken to represent a direct prelapsarian statement from a contemporary Adventist. However, Weber makes other statements that suggest that he is also a prelapsarian Christologist who, like Dederen, Adams, and Gulley, do not want to be associated with the strictly prelapsarian model of Jesus’ human nature.

Consequently, Weber (1994:71) asserts: 'He [Jesus] had a body like ours with diminished physical, mental, and moral capacity from what the first Adam possessed, but He did not have our sinful nature'. He then adds: 'This information in Romans 8:3 clarifies the truth about Christ's nature. He came in weak human flesh but only the likeness, the appearance, of sinful flesh. He looked like one of us, not like sinless Adam, but His nature was pure and holy, whereas ours needs salvation' (Weber 1994:71-72).

This is the extent to which some contemporary Adventists have gone to move away from both the strict postlapsarian and prelapsarian positions. They now hold what they have called the 'alternative', or 'unique', or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature which, as I have shown above, is actually prelapsarian.

This discussion will be incomplete without Webster's statement. Webster did an in-depth study of Adventist thought on the nature of Jesus. At the end of his study he states: 'We SUBMIT, however, that Jesus Christ, while coming in fallen human nature was not infected by original sin and was born without any tendencies and propensities to sin, thus, we need have no misgivings concerning His absolute sinlessness' (Webster 1984:451).

Webster's earlier statement needs to be reproduced, for it gives a guide as to how he needs to be interpreted. It also gives a picture of the effort that some contemporary Adventists have made to maintain the postlapsarian view while, at the same time, embracing the prelapsarian view, but appear to be teaching the postlapsarian model, as Adams (1994:27) claims. The statement reads as follows: 'We SUBMIT, moreover, that as Jesus Christ came into the world in the humanity of Adam after the fall and not before the fall, He assumed humanity affected by the laws of heredity and subject to weakness, infirmity and temptation' (Webster 1984:451).

Webster indeed believes that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature. However, because his model omits 'propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam', it is prelapsarian. Thus, the observation made by Zurcher (1999:221), 'His [Webster's] position in favour of the post-fall nature of Jesus constitutes a positive vote in favour of

the traditional Christology', should be rejected. Webster has to be included on the list of contemporary Adventists who are labouring to maintain the postlapsarian model of Jesus' human nature, but at the same time hold the prelapsarian position. This is the dilemma into which some Adventist theologians have placed themselves since 1955/1956. After discussing Erickson's Christological model, I will explain why Adventist theologians have found themselves in this dilemma.

In my view, Erickson's Christological model is not different from Gulley's. I called it prelapsarian at the beginning of this study, because Erickson argues that Jesus took the spiritual nature of a pre-fall Adam. He (Erickson 2013:671) asserts: 'Jesus' humanity was not the humanity of sinful human beings, but that possessed by Adam and Eve from their creation and before their fall'. This statement clearly suggests that Erickson is a pre-fall Christologist. He adds: 'His [Jesus'] was, spiritually, the type of humanity that we will possess when we are glorified' (Erickson 2013:671).

That Erickson believes that Jesus Christ assumed Adam's pre-fall human nature is confirmed by this statement: 'There have been only three pure human beings: Adam and Eve (before the fall), and Jesus' (Erickson 2013:657). Like Gulley, Erickson omits 'propensities and drives caused by the fall of Adam' from his Christological model.

It is interesting to observe that, while suggesting that Jesus Christ assumed a pre-fall human nature, Erickson seems to support the view that the physical side of Jesus' human nature was the same one that we all possess. He argues: 'Jesus was capable of feeling fatigue and weariness, pain and suffering, hunger, even the anguish of betrayal, denial, and abandonment by those closest to him. He experienced the disappointment, discouragement, and distress of soul that go with being fully human. His humanity was complete' (Erickson 2013:705).

There is no doubt that Erickson believes that Jesus' human nature was pre-fall only spiritually. The aspects of Jesus' physical nature that he lists, suggest that he believes that Jesus' physical nature was post-fall. If this is the case, then it can be concluded that

both Erickson and Gulley believe that Jesus' human nature was 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall'. This means that Erickson is in harmony with the Adventist alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature. This suggests then that, while I started this study with three models of Jesus' human nature, I am tentatively ending with two models: The post-fall and the alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' models.

I must mention, however that, since Adventists taught the postlapsarian model of Jesus' human nature until the 1955/1956 conversations with Evangelical theologians, the alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model is Evangelical and not Adventist. However, Adventists claim to be Evangelical (Vyhmeister 2000:1). It can thus be concluded that the Evangelical model of Jesus' human nature is also Adventist. Adventists had, prior to 1955/1956, been viewed by Evangelicals as a cult. As I noted in the study, one reason for this was the Adventist post-fall view of Jesus' human nature. When Adventists told their Evangelical brethren, '[t]he old Colcord minority – view note in *Bible Readings* – contending for an inherent sinful, fallen nature for Jesus – had years before been expunged because of its error' (Froom 1971:469), they were accepted as authentic Christians. Froom reports that an Evangelical Baptist, Walter R. Martin, who was involved in the conversations wrote: 'To charge the majority of Adventists today with holding these heretical views is *unfair, inaccurate, and decidedly unchristian*' (Froom 1971:473; original emphasis). In the foreword to Walter R. Martin's book, Dr. Barnhouse proposes that 'those Seventh-day Adventists who follow the Lord in the same way as their leaders who have interpreted for us the doctrinal position of their church, are to be considered true members of the body of Christ' (Martin 1960:7).

The point to note is that Gulley's Christological model, which reflects the thinking of a good number of contemporary Adventist theologians, is not different from Erickson's. If I take Gulley's definition of the terms, 'pre-fall' and 'post-fall' to be correct, then both Gulley and Erickson are pre-fall Christologists. This pre-fall Christological model is Evangelical and Adventist at the same time, since Adventists claim to be Evangelical.

However, the pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature is not strictly prelapsarian. A strictly prelapsarian model of Jesus' human nature would have both the spiritual and physical aspects of Jesus' human nature, pre-fall. In other words, Jesus would have to be exactly like the pre-fall Adam, both spiritually and physically. This is because, in my opinion, there are only two known natures in the Bible: The divine and the human nature. The divine nature is eternally holy, while the human nature is either pre-fall or post-fall, but not both in one person. It is for this reason that Gulley's and Erickson's Christological model should be categorised as alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall'. It is indeed pre-fall, but not strictly pre-fall.

For the purposes of this study, I propose a rejection of the alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature, as taught by both Gulley and Erickson, because of its inconsistency. It lacks NT support. It does not consistently take into consideration the full contexts of pre-fall and post-fall humanity. It fails to adequately resolve the dual problem of sin. It disqualifies Jesus from being the fallen, sinful humanity's substitute. It makes Jesus an example for the pre-fall Adam in overcoming temptation. It makes Jesus the pre-fall Adam's High Priest and not a post-fall humanity's High Priest. It is formulated, based on a philosophical reasoning that, since all fallen, sinful human beings are born in need of a saviour, Jesus was born sinless. In other words, it does not take into consideration the fact that Jesus only took a human nature for purposes of salvation and therefore it was possible to take a fallen, sinful human nature, without being in need of a saviour. He took what was not His by native right.

Having rejected the alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature, I remain with one model: The post-fall or postlapsarian model as taught by Sequeira. In the concluding chapter, I will revise this model so that it totally agrees with the NT data. For now, I will continue comparing Gulley and Erickson's view of Jesus' human nature.

#### **14.4.4 Biological Approach to the Incarnation**

I have already discussed Gulley's position with respect to how Jesus was formed in Mary's womb. I have noted that he does not venture into biological processes to explain how Jesus was formed. He leaves the mystery of the incarnation where he finds it in God's word: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35).

On the other hand, Erickson has gone outside the Bible to explain the incarnation, using biological processes. He has argued that God created a sperm specifically for the occasion of the incarnation. His reason for this is that, if Jesus had been created after Mary's genetic material alone, he would have been her clone and female. Thus, Gulley and Erickson are not in agreement on this aspect of Christology. What about in the area of Jesus' temptation?

#### **14.4.5 Jesus' Temptation**

Basically, both Gulley and Erickson believe that Jesus was tempted in the same way that humans are tempted. This means that Jesus was tempted in the same way that the pre-fall Adam was tempted – that is, in a sinless spiritual human nature. Jesus was tempted to fulfil the legitimate desires of humanity in illegitimate ways, but He always refused to do as Satan suggested. He was at a disadvantage, because He had a weak physical frame, whereas the pre-fall Adam was tempted in a physical nature that was as physically strong as God had created it.

Both Gulley and Erickson contend that Jesus' temptations were more intense than what born-again Christians have ever and will ever experience, because He did not succumb to temptation, whereas born-again Christians have at times succumbed to temptation. More than that, Jesus' temptations were more intense than those we experience because, whereas He had the inherent divine power to which He could have appealed if He had chosen, born-again Christians have nothing, except their spiritual poverty.

It can be concluded, therefore, that Gulley and Erickson are in perfect harmony when it comes to Jesus' temptation. The reason for this is because they both hold the alternative, or pre-fall, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature, which omits 'propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam'. Related to Jesus' temptation is the aspect of His sinlessness.

#### **14.4.6 Jesus' Sinlessness**

This study reveals that both Gulley and Erickson believe that Jesus was sinless in nature and in performance. In other words, Jesus was born without sin in nature and He lived a life of perfect obedience.

It is interesting to note that both Gulley and Erickson believe that all descendants of Adam are born with a fallen, sinful human nature while, at the same time they believe that Jesus, who was Adam's descendant, was born sinless in nature. They both suggest that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit prevented a transfer of sin in nature from Mary to Jesus. In other words, the law of heredity did not apply to Jesus as far as His spiritual nature was concerned. This thought is not explicitly stated in Gulley's Christology, but it is implied. Erickson, however, is very explicit. Commenting on Luke 1:35, he (Erickson 2013:689) asserts:

It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or of guilt from Mary to Jesus. Without that special sanctifying influence, he would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have.

I have already discussed Erickson's explanation when evaluating his model of Jesus' human nature. What I further want to emphasise is that he suggests that there was no conveyance of depravity from Mary to Jesus and that this was because of the special sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. In terms of His perfect obedience, Jesus depended on external power from the other members of the Godhead.



#### **14.4.7 Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension Body**

Gulley and Erickson disagree on the aspect of Jesus' resurrection and ascension body. Gulley (2012:471-472) argues that there is a bodily continuity between the Jesus of Calvary and the Jesus of the resurrection, for His nature did not need to be changed from mortality to immortality, or from corruptibility to incorruptibility. This was because He was sinless and divine. It would appear that, in Gulley's view, Jesus came out of His grave with a body that had not undergone any change through the resurrection. With the same body, Jesus ascended to heaven.

Erickson (2013:711), on the other hand, believes that the resurrection of Jesus began a metamorphosis to Him, which was completed at His ascension. It is his contention that Jesus' resurrection body was not yet ready for ascension. He suggests that Jesus' ascension was not merely a change of place, but of state. It was not merely a physical and spatial change, but spiritual as well.

According to Erickson (2013:711), Jesus' current humanity is not the type of humanity that we have, or even the humanity that He had while He was on earth. His humanity is a perfected humanity of the type that believers in Him will have after their resurrection. All the limitations that Jesus' pre-resurrection humanity had, were removed from Him through His resurrection and ascension.

While I do not agree with Erickson's view of Jesus' resurrection and ascension body, I appreciate his suggestion that Jesus' humanity needed to be perfected. He argues that Jesus' spiritual nature was like that of Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. Jesus did not receive from His mother the tendency to sin that all descendants of Adam are born with. This being the case, it can be argued that Jesus' spiritual nature did not need to be perfected, but Jesus' physical nature was like the physical nature of the people He found on earth – the physical nature of His mother. Thus, it can be concluded that Erickson's statement that Jesus' post-resurrection humanity is a perfected humanity of the type that the saved will have after their resurrection, refers to His physical nature. It is difficult to tell exactly what Erickson intends to convey. However, he seems to be closer to the

biblical truth on this aspect than Gulley. In my opinion, the ambiguity in Erickson's statements is a direct result of the alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model that he holds. I will close this discussion by comparing the philosophical categories and thought patterns that influenced Gulley and Erickson to formulate their Christological models.

#### **14.4.8 Philosophical Categories and Thought Patterns**

Gulley thinks in terms of the nature of sin, before he formulates his model of Jesus' human nature. All descendants of Adam are born sinners in need of a saviour. The saviour of the world should not Himself be a sinner in need of salvation. Therefore, Jesus did not assume a fallen, sinful human nature – He assumed the spiritual nature of the pre-fall Adam and the physical nature of the post-fall Adam. Jesus assumed some aspects of post-fall humanity and some aspects of pre-fall humanity. His human nature was 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall'. In Adventist circles, this model has been called the alternative or unique model of Jesus' human nature.

As Gulley is very much aware of the dual problem of sin, he definitely wanted to formulate a model of Jesus' human nature that can adequately resolve this dual problem of sin. He therefore suggests that by assuming a human nature, Jesus qualified to be our substitute. As our substitute, Jesus took our sins and died the death we deserved to die. However, how did Jesus deal with the problem of sin in nature? This is what Gulley (2012:439) argues: 'Although Christ's followers are a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), being fitted for heaven (2 Cor. 3:18), they still exist in a corruptible nature until the second advent of Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-54), and so Christ gifts them His sinless life as well as His substitutionary death'.

Thus, in Gulley's view, Jesus' substitutionary death took care of sin as an act of disobedience, whereas His sinless life replaced sin in our nature. Christologists such as Sequeira, have therefore objected to the idea that sin in nature was dealt with by Jesus simply gifting His followers His sinless life. God needed to deal with this problem of sin by

destroying it on the cross, as Paul suggested in Romans 8:3. I discussed this when I was evaluating Sequeira's Christological model of Jesus' human nature.

Sin, whether in nature, or as an act of disobedience, participates in a broken relationship with God (Gulley 2012:434). Thus, in Gulley's opinion, to argue that Jesus assumed the post-fall spiritual nature of Adam, is to suggest that He participated in this broken relationship with God. Therefore, Jesus did not assume the post-fall spiritual nature of Adam. He was on a mission to save the fallen, sinful human beings from sin in nature and performance. He was on a mission to bridge the gulf between God and the fallen humanity, caused by humanity's sin. Therefore, He needed to be sinless in nature as well as in performance. His role was to be a sinless medium through which God reconciled the fallen humanity with Himself (2 Cor 5:19). Jesus only became sin for us on the cross (2 Cor 5:21). It is, therefore, Gulley's contention that God's mission had to determine the extent of His identity with the fallen human nature (Gulley 2012:435).

Gulley has thought about the nature of temptation as well as the concepts of example and priesthood when formulating his Christological model. In terms of temptation, he suggests that Jesus simply needed to be tempted in the way that humanity is tempted, not necessarily in the way that the fallen human beings are tempted (Gulley 2012:455). Jesus was tempted in the way that the pre-fall Adam was tempted. He was tempted to break His relationship with the holy Trinity. This was enough, for it is exactly what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The fact that He did not succumb to temptation and that He had an inherent divine power, which He could easily have appealed to, had He chosen to do so, made His temptation more intense than His followers have and will ever experience. His sinless nature made the temptation harder to overcome than in the case of us humans who have sinful natures. As a sinless substitute, Jesus is an example to His followers in overcoming temptation. As one who experienced temptation and emerged victorious, Jesus is a sympathetic High Priest, ministering in the Sanctuary in heaven (Heb 8:1-6). This is Gulley's thinking pattern according to his model of Jesus' human nature.

Interestingly, Erickson thinks in a similar way. On the one hand, Gulley begins with the nature of sin and God's mission, and then decides what type of human nature Jesus assumed. On the other hand, Erickson begins with Jesus, specifically with His incarnation. Jesus had to be human as God intended humanity to be at the beginning. This being the case, it was necessary for Jesus to take upon His sinless, divine nature, the spiritual nature of Adam and Eve at creation and before they fell into sin (Erickson 2013:671).

It is Erickson's contention that, when we think of humanity, we must not begin with ourselves, but with Jesus. In order for us to know true humanity, we must examine the human nature of Jesus, for He most fully reveals the true nature of humanity (Erickson 2013:671). We are not true humanity – we are broken-down vestiges of true humanity. Therefore, Jesus did not assume a fallen, sinful human nature. Had He done that, He would also become a broken-down vestige of true humanity. It is this mode of thinking that motivates Erickson to suggest that the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented a transmission of sin from Mary to Jesus (Erickson 2013:689). That Erickson suggests that the law of heredity would have applied to Jesus if it had not been for the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, is confirmed in this statement:

It seems likely that the influence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful and sanctifying in its effect that there was no conveyance of depravity or of guilt from Mary to Jesus. *Without that special sanctifying influence, he would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have* (Erickson 2013:689; emphasis added).

Erickson studied NT texts that suggest that Jesus was sinless. These texts include John 8:46: 'Which of you convicts me of sin?'; 2 Corinthians 5:21: 'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'; Hebrews 4:15: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'; Hebrews 7:26: 'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens'; 1 Peter 2:22: '...who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth'; and 1 John 3:5: 'And you know that He was manifested to take away

our sins, and in Him there is no sin'. Erickson interprets these texts in such a way as to imply that Jesus Christ was sinless in both nature and performance.

It is after examining the incarnate Jesus that Erickson has decided on what he should say with respect to Jesus' physical nature: Jesus got tired and sleepy, He became hungry and thirsty, and He experienced some emotions that are common to all of us. These are experienced by post-fall human beings. Thus, Erickson concludes that Jesus assumed a post-fall physical human nature.

In summation I need to reiterate that Gulley has put some thinking in the nature of sin and God's mission, before he formulated His Christological model of Jesus' human nature, which omits 'propensities and drives caused as a result of the fall of Adam'. In Gulley's view, God's mission determined the extent of Jesus' identity with the fallen humanity. It was necessary for Jesus to assume that sinless spiritual nature, for had He assumed a fallen spiritual nature, He would Himself have needed a saviour. He would then have been disqualified from being our sinless substitute. Erickson begins with the incarnation itself. He examines Jesus' incarnational life and concludes that He assumed the spiritual nature of the pre-fall Adam. However, both Christologists end up with Jesus' human nature that was 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall'.

#### **14.5 Conclusion**

I have critically examined the three Christological models with which I started this research journey. I have reconciled Gulley's model of Jesus' human nature with Erickson's. I have also proposed that the model of Gulley and Erickson should be rejected, because it does not cohere with the NT data. Whereas the NT suggests that Jesus had two natures – a divine and a human nature, the model taught by Gulley and Erickson implies three natures – the divine, the pre-fall spiritual nature, and the post-fall physical nature. This model fails to convincingly explain how God dealt with the dual problem of sin, through Jesus. In this model, Jesus is an impliedly pre-fall humanity's substitute. He is an example in obedience to the pre-fall humanity and not to the post-fall

humanity. He is pre-fall humanity's High Priest and not post-fall humanity's High Priest. Such a Jesus is definitely not the Jesus of the NT.

This leaves me with Sequeira's post-fall model, which, in my view, is consistent with the NT data. Sequeira moves from hamartiology to Christology and His major concern is soteriology. In his view, the incarnation was necessitated by humanity's sin problem. This means that, if there had not been a problem of sin, there would have been no incarnation. Therefore, Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature in order to redeem it and cleanse it of all sin. In doing so, Jesus did not become a sinner in need of a saviour. It is true that all descendants of Adam are born sinners in need of a saviour. However, Jesus was not a sinner in need of a saviour, because He *became* what He was not by native right. Indeed, the human nature He assumed was the very one that needs redemption, but because it was not His nature, He was not a sinner – He was the God-Man. He was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit and was therefore filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb. Thus, He was unique. Apart from that, in His earthly life, Jesus did not commit any sin.

Sequeira's model satisfactorily explains how God dealt with the dual problem of sin, through Jesus. Sin in nature was assumed and destroyed on the cross, after Jesus had successfully lived a sinless life. It was removed from His nature through the resurrection. Our sins were laid on Him, and in this way, He died a substitutionary death. This, to my mind, coheres with the NT data.

Finally, Sequeira's model of Jesus' human nature gives born-again fallen, sinful human beings hope for a holy living. The life that He expects His followers to live, He lived in their fallen, sinful human nature. He experienced temptation in the same fallen, sinful human nature in which His followers experience it. Having experienced temptation in a fallen, sinful human nature, He ascended to heaven with a glorified human nature, where He is now a sympathetic High Priest. His followers therefore have a sympathising High Priest in Him.

I should mention that, while Sequeira does mention the uniqueness of Jesus in his Christology, he has not explicitly stated that his post-fall model of Jesus' human nature is unique. A post-fall human being is a sinner, but Jesus was not. Therefore, it is important to make it clear, that while Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature, His was a unique post-fall human nature. Therefore, in the chapter that follows, I will propose a unique post-fall model of Jesus' human nature.

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **CONCLUSION:**

## **A PROPOSED UNIQUE POST-FALL HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST**

### **15.1 Introduction**

My research journey set out with three views of Jesus Christ's humanity. Sequeira holds the view that, at the incarnation, Jesus assumed the fallen nature of humanity. On the other hand, Erickson espouses the view that Jesus took the spiritual nature of the unfallen humanity, and the physical nature of the fallen humanity. Gulley holds the view that Jesus' human nature was unique: It was neither the pre-fall nor the post-fall human nature.

I undertook this study to compare and contrast the three models of Jesus' human nature and to critically evaluate them. I aimed to reconcile Erickson's pre-fall view with Gulley's 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' view. Erickson's view of how God produced a male human being in the Person of Jesus Christ with the involvement of only one human parent needed to be analysed and evaluated. I aimed to find out how the law of heredity affected the nature that Jesus assumed. To evaluate the two landmark creeds on Christology, Nicaea and Chalcedon, was one of my aims. I aimed to revise, refine, and extend existing knowledge on Christology, especially on the humanity of Jesus Christ. It was my aim to propose a view of the humanity of Jesus that takes seriously the contexts of the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity. My final aim was to make recommendations, in light of the findings of the study, with regard to what systematic theologians and other theologians should do to reconcile their views of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

This study is my contribution to literature on Christology, which is one of the most controversial topics within the field of Systematic Theology. It contributes a revised view of the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature. It makes a unique contribution to Christology in the sense that it is some kind of a conversation involving two representative SDA systematic theologians and an Evangelical representative theologian. Such a conversation took place in the 1950s and left Adventist theologians divided on the topic of the



humanity of Jesus Christ. This conversation hopes to unite SDA theologians and to invite Evangelical and all other theologians to reconsider their views of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1 introduced the study. Chapters 2-6 gave a historical overview of Christology. I reviewed the Christological views of my selected Christologists (Jack Sequeira, Millard J. Erickson, and Norman R. Gulley) in chapters 7-9. Chapter 10 dealt with human reproduction, genetics, and cloning. In chapters 11, 12, and 13, I evaluated the Christological views of Sequeira, Erickson, and Gulley, respectively. I noted that, although Sequeira's model of Jesus Christ's humanity is supported by the NT data, it needs to be revised. I proposed a rejection of the Christological views of Erickson and Gulley because, in my view, they are not supported by the NT data. While the two theologians have made valuable contributions to Christology, they both fail to satisfactorily explain how Jesus Christ dealt with the dual problem of sin. Their explanation that the Holy Spirit prevented a transmission of sin in nature from Mary to Jesus Christ is not convincing and is not supported by the NT data.

In chapter 14, I compared and contrasted the Christological views of the three Christologists. I reconciled Gulley's alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature with Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature to come up with the one taught by Gulley. I then proposed a rejection of the alternative, or unique, or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature taught by Gulley and Erickson. I noted that this model is inadequate to address the dual problem of sin. It is also not supported by the NT data. I observed that Sequeira's post-fall model of Jesus' human nature is more consistent with the NT data than the model taught by Gulley and Erickson.

The purpose of this chapter is to propose a unique post-fall model of Jesus' human nature, which, in my opinion, is consistent with the contexts of pre-fall humanity and post-fall humanity. I aim to evaluate Nicaea and Chalcedon and propose that, when formulating a model of Jesus' human nature, the two statements formulated at the two councils should not impede a Christologist's free exegetical study of the NT. The two statements reflect

the opinions of the theologians of the early centuries of the Christian Church and not necessarily what is taught in Scripture. Therefore, I will begin by evaluating Nicaea and Chalcedon. I will then discuss the pre-fall and post-fall human nature. I will afterwards discuss the reasons for the incarnation, followed by my proposal of a unique post-fall model of Jesus' human nature based on a discussion of some NT texts and the concept of heredity in light of the incarnation. I will close the chapter with recommendations. I need to state that I will base my model of Jesus' human nature on the NT data and not on church tradition, including Nicaea and Chalcedon.

## **15.2 Critical Evaluation: Nicaea and Chalcedon**

The Christological debates of the first five centuries of the Christian era were ontological. I did a review of these debates. In 325 AD, the Christian Church stated, *inter alia*:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible; And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of the same substance as the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth; Who because of us [humans] and because of our salvation came down, and became incarnate, and became [human], and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead, And in the Holy Spirit. But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes (Early Christian Texts sa.).

While I appreciate the efforts of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Christian Church to clarify the issue regarding the nature of Jesus, I find some problems in the creedal statement that was

formulated. It is for this reason that I will point out the areas of concern in the creedal statement.

It is my contention that the statement suggests that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before the incarnation took place. This questions the NT teaching that He was eternally God before He was incarnated. In other words, He existed together with the Father from eternity. In fact, He was called the Father before the incarnation (cf. Is 9:6). There was therefore not a time when Jesus Christ was issued by the Father, as He existed together with the Father as God (John 1:1-3) from eternity. Whatever the term 'begotten' in the statement means, it suggests that Jesus' existence before the incarnation was that of being 'begotten', not necessarily self-existing as the case is with the Father and as the NT suggests. In my opinion, it would have been more correct if the term 'begotten' was added to the statement, *'who for us humans and our salvation came down, took flesh, and was made human'*. I believe that the term 'begotten' applies to Jesus as the incarnate Son of God. He was 'begotten' of God when He was incarnated. At the incarnation, the second Person of the Godhead became the unique (μονογενής) or 'begotten' Son of God. Jesus was not eternally 'begotten' – He self-existed with the other two Persons of the Godhead.

By not stating that Jesus died, but that He suffered, the statement creates a problem for Christologists. As I have noted in this chapter, Jesus' sufferings involved His entire earthly life. It is necessary, therefore, to clearly state that He died. The statement should also have included Jesus' heavenly ministry as High Priest. It does not clarify the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while nothing is said about the Holy Spirit, except the statement, 'And in the Holy Spirit'.

I propose that since the Chalcedonian creed was formulated because the Nicene creed did not satisfactorily address the Christological questions of the day regarding the nature of Jesus, as theologians of the day observed, it should not be used as a starting point in one's formulation of a Christological model. However, it serves as a good starting point in our study of the history of Christology. Had the Christian church of the 5<sup>th</sup> century not

formulated the Chalcedonian creed, I would have proposed a revision of the Nicene creed. My proposal is that the Nicene creed should be left as it is for reference as we study the history of Christology.

When the church discovered gaps in the Nicene creed, it formulated another creedal statement in 451 AD. It is to this creedal statement that I will now turn. The council of Chalcedon made the following statement:

Following the Holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures, being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us. These things, therefore, having been expressed by us with the greatest accuracy and attention, the Holy Ecumenical Synod defines that no one shall be suffered to bring forward a different faith, nor to write, nor to put together, nor to excogitate, nor to teach it to others. But such as

dare either to put together another faith, or to bring forward or to teach or to deliver a different Creed to (those who) wish to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, from the Gentiles, or Jews or any heresy whatever, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, and the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laics; let them be anathematised (Early Church Texts sa.).

The creed formulated at Chalcedon clarified the Nicene creed. I appreciate the efforts of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Christian Church for coming up with this creedal statement. However, it teaches some concepts that, in my opinion, lack biblical support. Thus, I propose that it should be revised to reflect the NT data. Perhaps the task to revise the creed should be given to Christologists and theologians from various Christian denominations, who should work together, since today the Christian church is in a fragmented state. Apart from that, I propose that in one's efforts to formulate a Christological model, the starting point should be the NT, and not the Chalcedonian creed. Jesus' followers should study God's word on their own, guided by the Holy Spirit, and make their own judgements regarding His nature. The nature of Jesus is such a complex subject that a creedal statement like the one formulated at Chalcedon in 451 AD cannot be accepted to represent the view of every follower of Jesus. In the history of Christology, creedal statements have proven to stifle independent thinking and a critical study of God's word, as some of the people who have ventured to formulate their own models of the nature of Jesus, inconsistent with an accepted creed, have been branded as heretics, and excommunicated.

For the purposes of this study, I make some observations. The statement 'made in all things like us, sin only excepted', probably referring to sin in nature, is in my view not correct. Jesus was unlike us in sin as an act of disobedience, for He was tempted as we are, but without sin (Heb 4:15). The NT seems to suggest that the human nature He assumed had the law of sin dwelling in it, and yet Adams (1994:58) praises the statement 'made in all things like us, sin only excepted' as though it came direct from the mouth of God. He even suggests that many people who did not accept this statement have

shipwrecked their faith. The truth, however, is that there are some sincere and honest followers of Jesus who believe that the nature that He assumed was the very one in which the law of sin dwells. There are some post-fall Christologists who have therefore, not shipwrecked their faith. Jack Sequeira, reviewed in chapter 7 and evaluated in chapter 11 of this thesis, is an example of a post-fall Christologist who has not shipwrecked his faith.

As I have noted above, the statement, ‘begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead’, is not correct. Jesus was not begotten of His Father before the worlds. He self-existed together with the Father. He only became the unique Son of God at the incarnation. Indeed, in the mind of God, when the Godhead made the decision that, in case of sin, the Second Person would be incarnated, it was as good as though it had already happened. I argue this, based on the NT statement that Jesus is the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). If it can therefore be stated that Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world, He must have been incarnated in the mind of God at that very time. This refers to His humanity, for His divinity could not be slain.

The statement, ‘the Mother of God’ is not correct, for God does not have a mother. What was conceived in Mary’s womb was the human side of Jesus. This agrees with the angel’s statement: ‘And she [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins’ (Matt 1:21). Mary was the mother of the human side of the God-Man Jesus. Divinity was quiescent in Mary’s womb, and therefore it cannot be said to have been born. Thus, in my opinion, Mary was not the mother of God. Elizabeth rightfully asked this question: ‘But why is this *granted* ‘to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’ (Luke 1:43). Did she suggest that Mary was the mother of God? In my view, the Holy Spirit revealed to Elizabeth that the child in Mary’s womb was more important than the one in her own womb, for He was God incarnate, as John the Baptist Himself later stated (Mark 1:6-8; John 1:19-27; 3:22-36). Jesus was not only human, but also divine. This was similar to Peter’s recognition of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, when the Holy Spirit revealed this truth to him (cf. Matt 16:13-19).

The Person they saw as merely human was actually God. It is difficult to explain this as it is a mystery. Jesus was both God and man in Mary's womb and yet it was only the human side that developed as a baby until birth. He was not two persons in one being, but one Person with two natures. Fact is that God cannot have a mother, for He does not belong to the realm of humanity. To argue that He has a mother, is to suggest that He has a birthday. To the contrary, God is the great *I AM* (Ex 3:14). As God, Jesus Christ is the great *I AM* (Is 9:6; Mic 5:2; John 8:58).

I have evaluated the two creedal statements on the nature of Jesus in order to pave a way for my model of His human nature. In my view, to come up with a model of the nature of Jesus that truly reflects the NT data, the NT itself should be thoroughly investigated. However, before one does that, one has to appreciate both the pre-fall and post-fall human natures. The movement is from pre-fall humanity to post-fall humanity and back to pre-fall humanity again. God created humanity, through Jesus, the Word (cf. John 1:1-3, 14), in His image; humanity lost that image; then Jesus was incarnated to recreate His image in humanity. I will now turn to a discussion of the pre-fall human nature.

### **15.3 Pre-fall Human Nature**

The first two chapters of the OT give us the nature of the pre-fall human beings. The Triune God said: 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So, God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them' (Gen 1:26-27).

The NT explains that God is love (1 John 4:8). Love is the very essence of the nature of God. Love is God's character. This being the case then, it can be argued that human beings were created with God's character of love. My opinion is that when Adam and Eve were created in God's image, they loved God supremely and each other selflessly, since their love reflects God's love, which is supreme and selfless (cf. John 3:16). They lived in harmony with their Maker, since at the time they had not yet disobeyed. Disharmony with

their Maker is first recorded in Genesis 3:8-10. Based on Adam's statement in Genesis 2:23, I opine that before they sinned, Adam and Eve lived in harmony with each other; for they seem to only have started accusing each other after they sinned (cf. Gen 3:9-12), suggesting that they were no longer in harmony. Had they not lived in harmony before they sinned, the Holy Spirit would have inspired the author of Genesis to record that for us. Since love is God's character and God is holy, it can be argued that the human beings were created with a holy character. This holiness was, in my view, part of the image of God.

God has dominion over what He created. In creating human beings in His image, He endowed them with the ability to manage other creatures which were not created in His image (cf. Gen 1:26-28). In other words, it is my contention that dominion over the other creatures that God created was part of the image of God in humankind.

The Triune God told Adam: 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen 2:16-17). This text suggests that the human beings were created with a freedom of choice. Adam and Eve were created with the ability to choose to obey God or not to obey Him. A loving God did not want the supreme object of His love to serve Him out of fear, but out of reciprocal love toward Him.

God exists as a Trinity. There is perfect harmony in the Trinity. The three Persons of the Godhead are permanently united as one. God intended this perfect harmony and perfect unity to be reflected by Adam and Eve. Thus, perfect harmony and perfect unity between Adam and Eve were part of God's image (cf. Gen 2:18-25). Adam was created from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7) – his partner was built from material taken from him (Gen 2:18-25). This suggests that their nature was basically the same.

The members of the Godhead have existed together from eternity. They self-existed as one God – uncreated, without beginning or end. Beyond the time of their existence there is nothing that ever existed. Their existence goes back to infinite time.



Human beings were created to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Apart from having a body and a mind, human beings were created with a spirit (or the inner being) – that part in human beings through which God communicates with them. Paul referred to this spirit: ‘The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God’ (Rom 8:16). He related to the Thessalonians: ‘Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Thess 5:23). It is this spirit – this inner being of us – that distinguishes us from animals which were not created in the image of God.

God commanded Adam and Eve: ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ (Gen 1:28). These human beings were created with the ability to recreate themselves through reproduction. God put in them this ability to produce children.

There are debates going on in theological circles regarding the terms, ‘image’ and ‘likeness’. I do not intend to join the debate, for such an exercise is beyond the scope of this study. However, I believe that, when these human beings were created, they physically resembled their Maker. While God is Spirit (John 4:24), the Bible also refers to Him as having a physical form. He told Moses: ‘You cannot see my *face*; for no man shall see me, and live’ (Ex 33:20; emphasis added). This suggests that God has a face. God also stated: ‘Then I will take away my *hand*, and you shall see my *back*; but my *face* shall not be seen’ (Ex 33:23; emphasis added). Jesus said: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Matt. 5:8). Even though this verse refers to the kingdom of God, which is yet to come, it suggests that God is in a form in which He can be seen by those who are pure in heart. My opinion is that Jesus was referring to the same OT God, who spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai; for there is only one God (Deut 6:4). I contend that ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ refer to both physical and spiritual aspects of our nature. At creation, Adam and Eve physically resembled God. They also loved like God. They were holy like God, but then, when they sinned, their nature changed from what it was at creation, to a fallen, sinful nature.

## 15.4 Post-fall Human Nature

The first three chapters of the Bible relate the stories of creation and the fall of human beings. Without these three chapters we would be in the dark regarding our origin and where sin originated from. The sad story of how Adam and Eve ruined all of us is found in the first verses of Genesis 3: ‘The serpent said to Eve: “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”’ (Gen 3:4, 5). The Bible adds: ‘So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings’ (Gen 3:6-7).

The woman doubted God. After doubting God, she said YES to the serpent and NO to God. This doubt of God resulted in the breaking of His command. The relationship that had existed between God and the human beings was broken as well. Adam and Eve felt ashamed to stand in the presence of their Maker (Gen 3:8).

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they discovered that they were naked (Gen 3:10). When they were just created, they were naked and not ashamed (Gen 2:25), but now they were naked and ashamed. The first effect of their sin was the sad discovery that they were naked and ashamed. Shame was the first effect of disobedience. What followed was an attempt to hide their nakedness (Gen 3:7) – doing something independent of God, which they had not done before they fell into sin. Shame was followed by fear. They then started blaming each other, and others. Adam blamed God for creating the woman (Gen 3:12). At creation, Adam had sung this song of appreciation to God: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because, she was taken out of man’ (Gen 2:23). He had accepted God’s gift to Him in the person of the woman. When he committed sin, instead of accepting responsibility, he indirectly blamed God (Gen 3:12).

God then asked the woman what she had done and she responded: 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate' (Gen 3:13). She did not accept responsibility for the sin that she committed. The physical consequences of sin are recorded in Genesis 3:16-19. From the time Adam and Eve committed sin, there has not lived an immortal sinner because no one has eaten of the tree of life (Gen 3:22-24).

#### **15.4.1 Spiritual Death**

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they lost God's presence in their lives. The Holy Spirit left them. In other words, they died spiritually. Spiritual death is actually a separation from God. Through sin, Adam and Eve alienated themselves from God. They broke their relationship with God. Sadly, while Adam was created in the image of God, his son Seth (I believe Cain and Abel also, and all other descendants of Adam) was born in his own image. The Bible relates: 'And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth' (Gen 5:3). This was an image that had been marred by sin. It was a damaged image of God.

When God created Adam, He created him in such a way that whatever he did would affect his posterity, both spiritually and physically. Had Adam obeyed God, his descendants would probably also have obeyed God. If he sinned against God, his descendants would be born with a nature that leans toward sin. The sad fact is that he did commit sin.

The apostle Paul stated: 'And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings' (Acts 17:26). Since Adam was created a corporate human being, and since he only had children after he had already ruined himself through sin, no one was born afterwards who has escaped the tendency or propensity to sin – all human beings who have descended from Adam have been born with fallen, sinful natures. David realised this biblical fact and stated: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me' (Ps 51:5). For this reason, he prayed: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me' (Ps 51:10).

Descendants of Adam are born in need of a new creation. This is because they are born, being spiritually dead. From their mother's womb onwards, they are estranged from God. David related: 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies' (Ps 58:3). Isaiah asserted: 'Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb' (Is 48:8). Jeremiah added: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it' (Jer 17:9).

In their state of fallenness, human beings cannot change themselves. In this light, Jeremiah asked: 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil' (Jer 13:23). This is the reality about post-fall human beings. They are born, being spiritually dead. To Jesus' followers in Ephesus, Paul related: 'And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others' (Eph 2:1-3).

Because post-fall human beings are born spiritually dead, Jesus Christ stated to Nicodemus: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God', and 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:3, 5). Jesus gave the reason for this: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). In other words, those who are born of a fallen, sinful human nature, are spiritually dead, while those who are born of the Holy Spirit are spiritually alive.

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul gave an exposition of the idea of corporate oneness, in which he clearly stated that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, because all humans have sinned. The statement 'all [humans have] sinned' (Rom 5:12),

has been explained differently. In my opinion, however, it suggests that all humans have sinned in Adam, because the entire human race was created in him. In other words, when Adam sinned, he ruined the entire human race, to the extent that all his descendants are born in need of a saviour. Adam was the entire human race – therefore, when he sinned, the entire human race sinned. Adam’s descendants are born spiritually dead or in alienation from God. Human beings are born in a broken relationship with God. I will not attempt to do an exposition of the text, for others have already done it, and moreover, such an exposition is beyond the scope of this study. It will suffice, therefore, to simply reiterate that Adam’s one sin affected the human race in such a way that no one has entered this world with a nature free of the tendency, or drive, or leaning toward sin. All post-fall human beings are born in slavery to sin in nature – in desperate need of a saviour. All post-fall human beings are ‘flesh’, because they have been born of ‘flesh’.

The tyrannical nature of sin is shown as a struggle in Romans 7:13-24. Paul stated: ‘But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members’ (Rom 7:23). The tendency to sin is called ‘the law of sin’, it is called the ‘flesh’. This ‘flesh’ fights against the Spirit of God. Paul therefore advised: ‘I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish’ (Gal 5:16, 17).

I must point out that spiritual death results in a commission of acts of disobedience. We transgress God’s law (1 John 3:4) because we are already sinners by nature. We sin (miss the mark), because we have a weak moral nature. Sometimes we neglect to do the good things we know we are supposed to do because we are spiritually weak. James said: ‘Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin’ (James 4:17). This is what is called the sin of omission. Sometimes we do things without faith – the apostle Paul said that this is sin: ‘But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin’ (Rom 14:23). Not believing in Jesus Christ is sin (John 16:9). The point to note is that sin in nature is the root of the sins of omission and commission. It is the root of the sin of unbelief. Rejection of God’s

sacrifice by His unique Son on Calvary's cross stems from the root of sin, which is the sin in our fallen, sinful human nature.

In Psalm 51:1-3, the concept of sin has been summarised in three words: 'Have mercy upon me, o God, according to your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my *transgressions*. Wash me thoroughly from my *iniquity*, and cleanse me from my *sin*. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me' (emphasis added). Iniquity implies to be 'crooked', to be 'bent'. Transgression is lawlessness, or violation, or the breaking of God's law. Sin is missing the mark set by God. Iniquity is more of what we are, and not necessarily what we do. Related to the spiritual death, is the eternal or second death.

#### **15.4.2 Eternal Death**

Eternal death is what the book of Revelation calls the 'second death' (Rev 20:6, 14; 21:8). When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were condemned to die eternally. This is because the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Because God created the entire humanity in Adam, the entire humanity was condemned in him. In other words, all of Adam's descendants are born condemned to die the second death. However, Adam's descendants are not responsible for his sin. The condemnation came upon them simply because they share in Adam's already condemned life. They are born with a sinful nature, which is actually condemned to be destroyed.

It would appear that the eternal or second death is an extension of the spiritual death, whereby those who reject salvation through Jesus Christ will be separated from God forever. The separation that Jesus experienced on Calvary's cross because of our sins, which were laid on Him as our substitute, will apply to unrepentant sins. They chose to remain in a state of alienation from God. The state of alienation from God is actually an enmity with Him (Rom 8:5-8). People who have alienated themselves from God, hate Him so much that they would be uncomfortable in His presence. Apart from that, God is a consuming fire (Ex 24:17; Deut 4:24, 36; Heb 12:18-21, 29). People in a state of alienation cannot withstand His glory. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they developed

fear (Gen 3:10). When, on Mount Sinai, God appeared to the children of Israel, they feared and refused to stand in His presence (Ex 20:18-21). People in a state of alienation from God, exclude themselves from Him.

It is important to note that the second death is God's punishment of the wicked for choosing to remain in a state of rebellion against Him. Despite the efforts that God made to save them, they chose to rebel with Satan. Since Satan will eventually receive the penalty for his rebellion, the people who chose his rulership will be punished with him (Matt 25:41-46). In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus stated that the wicked will be punished (Matt 13:37-43).

The wicked will be cut off from God's presence (Ps 37:9, 22, 34, 38). The punishment of the wicked will be a total annihilation. It will be as though they never existed. Fire will consume them until they become ashes which will be blown away. This will be God's expression of His wrath (Rom 1:18-32; 2:5-11; Rev 14:9-11; 19:19-21; 20:10, 14; 21:8). However, before the time of God's wrath comes, mortal human beings have to experience the physical death, which some of Jesus' followers may not experience, because He will come for the second time while they are still living and hence will be taken to heaven without seeing death (1 Thess 4:15-17).

### **15.4.3 Physical Death**

Adam was told that, after experiencing hardship as a consequence of his sin, he would return to dust where he was taken from (Gen 3:17-19). This is what the Bible says about humankind's creation: 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being' (Gen 2:7). This being the case, it can be argued that death is a reversal of what happened at creation. The breath of life left the body, and the body became lifeless. The breath of life, which in some Bible translations is referred to as spirit (Ps 146:3, 4; Eccl 12:7, NIV, NKJV), is not a disembodied entity, but simply God's life-giving power. In the KJV, Psalm 146:4 refers to 'breath'. This is because the Hebrew term that is translated here as 'breath', can also be translated as 'spirit'. It is important to always remember that at crea-

tion, God breathed the breath of life into Adam's lifeless body. Breath is not something tangible that can leave the body as a disembodied entity, capable of a separate existence.

Physical death is also referred to as breathing one's last. For example, the Bible says: 'Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people' (Gen 25:8); 'So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him' (Gen 35:29); and 'when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people' (Gen 49:33). This is called rest. For example, the Bible states: 'So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David' (1 Kin 2:10). It is also called sleep. For example, the Bible says: 'And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt' (Dan 12:2); and 'when he had said this, he fell asleep' (Acts 7:60). It is also called 'yielding up the spirit' (Matt 27:50; Luke 23:46).

After studying both the OT and NT on the subject of death, I am convinced that, when one dies, one remains unconscious of everything that happens among the living until the resurrection day. In this light, the Bible relates: 'For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also, their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun' (Eccl 9:5, 6). Death is a state of non-existence. One gets back to the state of not being in existence – one only remains in God's memory and the memories of those who knew that person. This came as a result of Adam's sin and it remains part of human existence. Until Jesus comes the second time, death will knock on people's doors.

In summary, I have discussed the standard humanity – humanity in God's image. Unfortunately, the first human beings did not live within the boundaries that God had set for them. The result was a fallen, sinful humanity. However, God wanted to take the fallen, sinful



humanity back to the standard humanity, which involved the incarnation of His Son. Thus, in what follows, I will discuss reasons for the incarnation.

## **15.5 Reasons for the Incarnation**

Why did God assume a human nature? There are several reasons given by the NT. I will not list them in the order in which they are supposed to be discussed. Nevertheless, I will try as much as possible to begin with the reasons that specifically deal with salvation.

### **15.5.1 To Save Fallen, Sinful Human Beings**

Gabriel said to Joseph: 'And she [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:21). The primary reason why the second Person of the Godhead became human, was to save the fallen, sinful human beings. Paul stated: 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons' (Gal 4:4-5). Luke presented Jesus Christ's genealogy in such a way that he traced Him back to Adam, referring to 'the son of Enosh, the son Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God' (Luke 3:38). Adam was the son of God by creation. While Jesus is the Son of God through the incarnation, He is also the Son of Man through the incarnation. On the human side, Mary took Jesus all the way back to Adam. When Adam committed sin against God, he lost his sonship. Regaining the status of being 'son of God' required the incarnation of the Creator. It was only through the incarnation that Adam would regain the dominion that God has given him at creation.

The concept of salvation implies substitution. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). In order for human beings to escape death, there was a need for the second Person of the Godhead to assume the human nature. This would make Him mortal. Related to the concept of salvation, is the concept of the taking away of sin.

### **15.5.2 To Take Away Sin**

Salvation involved taking away sin from human life. John related: 'And you know that He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin' (1 John 3:5).

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said: ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ (John 1:29). Referring to what happened to Jesus on the cross, Paul argued: ‘For He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him’ (2 Cor 5:21). Peter asserted that Jesus ‘bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed’ (1 Pet 2:24).

In order for sinners to be saved, they needed to have a saving knowledge of God. They would only trust Him to save them from their sins, if they had a relational knowledge of Him. For this to happen, somebody needed to reveal God to them. Thus, the second Person of the Godhead was incarnated to reveal the Godhead to the human beings.

### **15.5.3 To Reveal God**

With the entrance of sin and the passage of time, people lost their knowledge of God. Since God has an enemy called Satan, who paints a picture of God which leaves people hating God instead of loving Him, there was a need that one of the members of the Godhead should come and paint a correct picture of God. Therefore, the second Person of the Godhead came to reveal God. In order for people to receive eternal life, they needed to know God. In His prayer for His disciples, Jesus Christ stated: ‘And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’ (John 17:3). This is a relational knowledge of God. The broken relationship between God and human beings caused by the sin of Adam could only be restored after Jesus had revealed His Father to the fallen, sinful human beings.

In order for us to know God, the second Person of the Godhead had to become human in order to reveal Him. In this light, the apostle John wrote: ‘And the Word [God] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14), and ‘No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him’ (John 1:18). The one who came to reveal God was His unique Son – the one who is God, but who also became human. The incarnation qualified Him to play this revelatory role in the

plan of salvation. Jesus Christ revealed God through His character of love. When the Bible speaks of God's glory, it refers to His character. This was revealed to Moses when He requested God to show him His glory. God proclaimed His Name, which is actually His glory or character (Ex 33:18-23; 34:5-7).

Before He went to the cross, Jesus prayed to His Father: 'I have glorified you on the earth. I have finished the work which you have given me to do' (John 17:4). The reason why the second Person of the Godhead became human, was in order for Him to glorify His Father by revealing His character. Revealing God's character involved living a selfless life – loving people unconditionally, eternally, and self-sacrificially.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews stated: 'God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they' (Heb 1:1-3). There is a finality in the revelation that God did through His Son. In Jesus the world has a complete revelation of God. It was for this reason that, when Philip said to Jesus: 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us', Jesus asked him: 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, "Show us the Father"?' (John 14:8, 9).

Jesus is the express image of the Father; He is the ultimate revelation of God. He related to Philip: 'Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does the works' (John 14:10). The relationship between the Father and the Son was so intimately close that Jesus could say that He said and did nothing that did not come from the Father. Listening to Jesus, was therefore listening to the Father and seeing Jesus

was seeing the Father. This is one reason why Jesus said to the Jews: 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30).

Jesus is Immanuel – God with us (Matt 1:23). Therefore, when Jesus was born, God came to dwell among His people. In other words, in Jesus, people saw God. The point to note is that the revelation that came through Jesus Christ was final – God will not reveal Himself in a better way than He did through Jesus Christ. Jesus also came to destroy Satan and death.

#### **15.5.4 To Destroy Satan and His Works**

Sin originated with Eve (Gen 3:1-7; cf. 1 Tim 2:14). Eve was deceived by Satan, who worked through the serpent (cf. Rev 12:9). Eve disobeyed God, and Adam followed her in disobedience. Creating the human beings was a risky undertaking, because of the freedom of choice with which they were endowed (cf. Gen 2:16-17). Interestingly, even before the human beings were created, God made a provision to save them in case of sin. The Bible states: 'All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the sea beast], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev 13:8). Paul asserted: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Jesus, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved' (Eph 1:3-5). The plan of salvation was not an afterthought. It was part of God's plan right before human beings were created, and this plan would involve destroying Satan and death.

Amazingly, the plan of salvation involved the death of a substitute, but this substitute needed to be one with authority to save human beings and also to qualify to be a substitute. Only the Creator had the authority to save human beings, but then, He is immortal. So, how was He going to die as humanity's substitute? There was a need for the incarnation. In this light, the author of the letter to the Hebrews related: 'Inasmuch

then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb 2:14-15). John said: 'He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8). Jesus was manifested to abolish death – this He did through His death on Calvary's cross and His resurrection.

Paul argued: 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 15:50-57).

Jesus' death on the cross destroyed the second or eternal death, which is actually what the Bible calls the 'wages of sin' (Rom 6:23). The fact that Jesus rose from eternal death is an assurance to His followers that they will be resurrected from their physical death in case they die. In other words, through His resurrection from eternal death, Jesus made a provision that those who die the first or physical death should rise from their graves at His second coming. Thus, Paul stated: 'The last enemy that will be destroyed is death' (1 Cor 15:26). This, of course, is the physical death, since followers of Jesus still experience death. However, it was only Jesus who experienced the eternal or second death, which means that He destroyed it. He claimed: 'I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and Death' (Rev 1:18).

Through His resurrection, Jesus made a provision for His followers to be changed from mortality to immortality, and from corruptibility to incorruptibility. This will take place at His second coming. This suggests that, if Jesus had not been incarnated, human beings would have remained mortal and corruptible. Jesus was also incarnated in order to become an example to His followers in experiencing temptation and obedience.

#### **15.5.5 To be an Example in Experiencing Temptation and in Obedience**

Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation. There was therefore a need for someone to set an example of victory over temptation. Someone needed to demonstrate that God's law can be kept. The second Person of the Godhead therefore took humanity upon Himself: He became a human being, while remaining God, so that, as a human being, He may set an example of perfect obedience. In this light, the author of the letter to the Hebrews said: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15).

Since Jesus kept His Father's commandments, He was able to encourage His followers to be obedient. He said to His disciples: 'If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love;' and 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (John 15:10; 14:15). The example concept applies to suffering as well.

#### **15.5.6 To be an Example in Suffering**

Children of God experience suffering. This is not suffering which is common to all people, but it is experienced only by Jesus' followers. Jesus suffered, because He chose to obey His Father. This is suffering that comes as a result of one's choice to live a life of self-denial for Jesus' sake. He said to His disciples: 'If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels' (Luke 9:23-26).

It would not make sense for Jesus to speak of suffering if He had not been incarnated and experienced it Himself. The Bible makes it clear that He set an example for His followers to follow, as Peter stated: 'For to this you were called, because Jesus also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps' (1 Pet 2:21). When Jesus' followers experience suffering, they have Jesus to look to. Peter added: 'Therefore, since Jesus suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God' (1 Pet 4:1-2). When followers of Jesus suffer for being Christians, they have Jesus to encourage them, because He has already experienced suffering while He was here on earth. God needed to become human in order to qualify to be a sympathetic High Priest.

#### **15.5.7 To Qualify to be a Sympathetic High Priest**

The author of the letter to the Hebrews averred: 'For indeed He [Jesus] does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted' (Heb 2:16-18). The temptations that Jesus experienced as a human being made Him the right person to serve as High Priest. He understood how it feels to be tempted. He can therefore sympathize with His followers who experience temptations. It has been written about Him: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15).

The requirements for one to qualify to become a priest are stated in Hebrews 5:1-4: One had to be taken from among one's own people. Thus, Jesus had to become part of the human family. One had to have compassion on the people who went astray, because one was also subject to weakness. Only a human being would have that kind of compassion on other human beings that the Bible speaks of, because He would understand their struggles. The earthly priests were sinners, just like the people they represented before God in the sanctuary. There is, however, a difference, when it comes to Jesus, because

in His case, He did not commit any sin. In terms of His human nature, Jesus was like the people He was to represent before God in heaven as High Priest.

To summarise, the primary reason for the incarnation of Jesus was the salvation of fallen human beings. God took upon His divine nature, our human nature, in order that He might take away our sin. He assumed a human nature in order to reveal the character of the Holy Trinity. To destroy Satan and his works, it was necessary for the second Person of the Godhead to assume a human nature. It was only as a human being that Jesus could set an example in overcoming temptation and obeying His Father. Followers of Jesus experience suffering. For this reason, Jesus had to assume a human nature in order to set an example in suffering for choosing God. Finally, Jesus had to assume a human nature in order to qualify to be a sympathetic High Priest. However, what type of human nature did Jesus assume?

## **15.6 A Unique Post-fall Human Nature**

In my opinion, the model of Jesus' human nature that is consistent with the NT data and takes into consideration both pre-fall and post-fall human natures, is what I have called a *unique, post-fall human nature*. In what follows, I will discuss this unique, post-fall model of Jesus' human nature.

### **15.6.1 My Way of Thinking about the Issue**

How do I view the subject of the human nature of Jesus? In which direction do I argue in my formulation of a model of Jesus' human nature? God created human beings in His own image (pre-fall nature). Through sin, human beings have lost the image of God (post-fall nature). God wanted to take the post-fall human beings back to their pre-fall state – therefore the incarnation was needed. The problem that God had to deal with, was sin. Sin is both a tendency and an act of disobedience. Sin in nature needs to be destroyed right within its domain. Sins need to be laid on a substitute. In order for Jesus to destroy sin in nature, He needed to assume that sin in His nature. In order for Jesus to have our many sins laid on Him, He needed to qualify to be our substitute. Thus, Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature. All the reasons for the incarnation that I have discussed above



fit a post-fall model of Jesus' human nature. However, where do I start my discussion, and where do I go from my starting point?

## **15.6.2 My Starting Point**

After taking into consideration the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity, I propose that the starting point, when formulating a model of Jesus' human nature, should be John 1:1-3 and 14. This is because, to my mind, it is the clearest NT text that states that God was incarnated. From John 1:1-3 and 14, I will move to other NT texts. I will formulate my model of Jesus' human nature based on the arguments I will present. I believe that it is possible to formulate a tenable Christological model based on the NT data.

### **15.6.2.1 The Word Became Flesh**

It is written: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made' (John 1:1-3). What the text suggests is that the Godhead consists of more than one Person. At least it is known that the agent in creation was someone called the Word. It is also known that this Word was God. As I noted in the introductory chapter, the divinity of Jesus is a topic beyond the scope of this study. It suffices, therefore, to simply reiterate that the one through whom creation took place, was the Word who was in the beginning with God and was Himself God. Having stated this, I come to the mystery of all mysteries – the Word became flesh.

John stated: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). The ESV translates this verse as follows: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth'. God became human – this is the mystery of all mysteries.

The term flesh can refer to either the state of being human, or the state of alienation from God. For example, after His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples: 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and

bones as you see I have' (Luke 24:39). In this text, Jesus argued that the fact that He had flesh and bones, proved that He was human. He also said to Nicodemus: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). The term 'flesh' is contrasted with the 'Spirit'. 'Flesh', in this case, refers to the state of alienation from God. 'Flesh' opposes the Spirit. In this light, Paul stated: 'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish' (Gal 5:16, 17). 'Flesh' in this text refers to the nature of a post-fall humanity, which is in alienation from God. Despite the fact that Galatians 5:16 and 17 refers to a born-again person, it suggests that the 'flesh' remains in opposition to the Spirit of God.

The question that arises is this: Did Jesus assume the flesh, which is in alienation from God? To answer this question correctly, it is important to ask another question: What type of flesh did Jesus find when He came to earth? In my opinion, Jesus became the very flesh that He found. He assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that He found. There does not seem to be any suggestion in John 1:14 that Jesus assumed a human nature different from ours, but the text suggests that, despite having assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that He found, He was the unique Son of God. He was not a human being in the sense in which all of us are – He was the God-Man. To suggest that Jesus assumed a human nature different from ours on the basis of what John said in John 1:14, is to import our own idea into the text.

It should be noted, however, that fallen, sinful human beings need the new-birth experience (cf. John 3:3, 5), but nowhere in the whole NT do we find a text that indicates that Jesus needed the same (new-birth) experience. When it comes to people other than Jesus, the Bible relates: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). Why did this text not apply to Jesus, if He has assumed a fallen, sinful human nature? John reported: 'He [Jesus] came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become

children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (John 1:11-13).

It is suggested in John 1:11-13 that, to be born of the will of the flesh, is the same as to be born of the will of a man. This is to enter this world in the natural way – through fertilisation of the ovum by a sperm. Had Adam and Eve not committed sin and ruined the human race, all their descendants would have entered this world through the same process. However, there would then have been no need for the new birth, for all of Adam's descendants would have been in the image and likeness of God. However, since Adam and Eve only had children after they had fallen into sin, all human beings are born with a nature that leans toward sin and hence, are in need of a saviour as soon as they enter this world.

This did not apply to Jesus. He did not enter this world by the will of the flesh, or of a man. He was not born of blood. It was God who willed His incarnation. Gabriel told Mary: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). To Joseph He said: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matt 1:20, 21). All human beings enter this world through the natural biological processes that take place in the woman's body and therefore they are born of blood, of the will of the flesh, of the will of a man. Nevertheless, Jesus' conception in Mary's womb was by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. God prepared Jesus' body in Mary's womb to which He joined His divinity. Thus, the incarnation was the union of divinity and humanity – a union which allowed Jesus Christ to be one Person with two natures.

It is important to state that Mary had a fallen, sinful human nature. Therefore, since Jesus Christ's human nature came from her, He assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. However, He did not need the new-birth experience, because He was a unique human

being – the God-Man. He was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother’s womb. Thus, while He assumed the same fallen, sinful human nature that all descendants of Adam and Eve have, the statement He made: ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’ (John 3:6), did not apply to Him. Jesus was therefore not born of ‘blood’, or of the will of the ‘flesh’, or the will of ‘man’, but He *became* flesh. He *became* that which He was not by native right. He *assumed* the very fallen, sinful human nature that He found in order to redeem it and rid it of the law of sin, or tendency, or propensity, or leaning, or drive, caused as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve.

The view that Jesus assumed a fallen, sinful human nature is in tandem with the law of substitution, which requires that the substitute must be related to the people whose place he will take. If Jesus had assumed a pre-fall human nature, He would have become the pre-fall Adam’s substitute, and not the post-fall Adam’s substitute (I argued this point in my MTh dissertation, 2015). Thus, for the purposes of this study the statement I have made, suffices.

#### **15.6.2.2 In the ‘Likeness of Sinful Flesh’**

There is no statement in the NT that categorically states that Jesus Christ assumed a fallen, sinful human nature. There is also no statement in the NT that categorically states that Jesus assumed an unfallen or pre-fall human nature. The argument that Jesus assumed the pre-fall spiritual nature of Adam is premised on the view that if He had assumed a post-fall human nature, both spiritually and physically, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of a saviour. As this study has shown, scholars like Gulley and Erickson are thus compelled to interpret Luke 1:35 in such a way as to suggest that the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented a transmission of sin in nature from Mary to Jesus. I have noted, however, that the NT data does not support this interpretation. Gulley and Erickson interpret certain texts, such as 1 John 3:5 and Hebrews 7:26, to refer to Jesus Christ’s sinlessness in both nature and performance, while the texts actually refer to Jesus’ sinless performance, and not sinlessness in nature.

Paul made this statement: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3). How should the phrase, 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', be interpreted? Why did the apostle not say, 'In sinful flesh'? What did he really want to communicate? How can one be sure that one's interpretation is correct?

In chapter 7, Paul's arguments were discussed, where he referred to the believer's struggle with the law of sin which resides in the flesh. The problem is not with God's law, for it is good, holy, and spiritual (Rom 7:12-14). The problem is with the post-fall human nature, which leans toward sin. The believer in Romans 7 desires to keep God's law, but is failing. He thus realizes that the reason for his failure is the flesh which is not subject to the law of God. The flesh is weak. Therefore, the good, holy, and spiritual law has failed to free the believer from the law of sin, but God has done it, by sending His Son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', through whom He has condemned the law of sin in the flesh.

The phrase 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', can be interpreted in at least two ways. The first interpretation suggests that Jesus did not assume the sinful flesh, but only its likeness. It has been argued that 'likeness' refers to the physical aspect of the fallen, sinful human beings, which include getting tired, desiring sleep, feeling thirsty and hungry, aging, and others. In this light, Gulley (1982:38) states: 'Jesus actually met man where humanity was – taking upon Himself all the physical results of the Fall, but not the spiritual'. He argues that "likeness" doesn't mean "sameness" (Gulley 1982:35). Weber is in harmony with Gulley when he asserts: 'The Bible says Jesus came "in the flesh" but only in the "likeness of sinful flesh"' (Weber 1994:75).

In my view, to correctly interpret this text, it is necessary to critically consider its context. The problem is humanity's spiritually weak flesh. Human beings have a weak physical nature, but this is not the problem that Paul discussed in Romans 7 and 8. Therefore, it is very unlikely that, with the phrase, 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', he means a post-fall physical nature. Paul seemingly suggested that, in order for God to resolve the problem of the sinful flesh, He sent His Son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. It was 'in the likeness

of sinful flesh', in which God sent His Son, that 'He condemned sin in the flesh'. Sin was condemned in the flesh of God's Son, which was actually our flesh. This takes me back to John 1:14. I argued that Jesus Christ became what He was not by native right. He took upon His holy, divine nature, our sinful, human nature. This He did, in order to redeem the sinful, human nature and cleanse it of sin in nature. Because Jesus Christ became what He was not by native right, Paul argued that God sent Him 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Jesus Christ did not come 'in sinful flesh', but 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. We are all conceived and are born in a sinful flesh, for we are human beings and nothing else. Jesus Christ was eternally God. He took upon Himself our fallen, sinful human nature. There is certainly a big difference between being 'in sinful flesh', and 'in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Those who are born 'in sinful flesh', are devoid of the Holy Spirit right from birth (except for John the Baptist). On the other hand, Jesus Christ, who was sent 'in the likeness of sinful flesh', was born, already filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, He was not conceived in the natural way – He was conceived through the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. His was not a natural way of entering this planet, but through incarnation. He, who was eternally God, eternally became the God-Man.

Back to the Romans 8:3: 'For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness (ὁμοιώματι) of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh' (ESV). The term *likeness* is similarly used in Paul's letter to the Philippians, where he wrote: 'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Jesus Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness (ὁμοιώματι) of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross' (Phil 2:5-5, ESV).

There is no doubt that, by the statement 'in the form of God', Paul meant that Jesus Christ was God. There is also no doubt that, by the statement 'the form of a servant', Paul meant that Jesus Christ indeed became a servant. What about the statement, 'in the likeness of men'? How is it to be interpreted? Did Paul suggest that Jesus was not really a human being, but someone who looked like a human being? If the first interpretation I gave of

Romans 8:3 is to be accepted, the phrase 'in the likeness (ὁμοιώματι) of men' in Philippians 2:7 must be similarly interpreted, but then, was Jesus Christ not a human being? Did He simply have an appearance of a human being, when in fact He was not? I do not think so. Jesus Christ was indeed a human being. However, He was also God – He was the God-Man. This is why the apostle states that He was born 'in the likeness of men'. This is to indicate that Jesus Christ was not a human being in the sense in which the rest of us are human beings – He was a human being through the incarnation.

From the foregoing argument, I conclude that the statement 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' simply means that Jesus Christ assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that He found, but that nature was not His by native right. Therefore, He was not in a sinful flesh. He did not have a sinful flesh. Instead, He *assumed* a sinful human flesh. Sinful flesh was not Jesus', but ours. He assumed it in order to have it redeemed and cleansed of sin. By assuming the fallen, sinful flesh, Jesus had it destroyed on the cross. It was then removed from His nature through the resurrection. Now Jesus Christ bears a human nature in which the law of sin no longer dwells.

Romans 8:3 suggests that Jesus Christ assumed a unique post-fall human nature. It was the very post-fall human nature, common to all descendants of Adam. However, it was unique in the sense that Jesus Christ bore it in union with His divine nature. While we receive a post-fall human nature through normal biological processes, He received a post-fall human nature through the incarnation. While we are born devoid of the Holy Spirit, He was born, already filled with the Holy Spirit.

Scholars like Adams have argued against the idea of Jesus Christ being filled with the Holy Spirit right from the womb. Adams (1994:26) argues that, if Jesus Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb, it would have been nice for the rest of human beings to likewise be filled with the Holy Spirit – that would have been a better beginning than the case has always been. I should observe, however, that Adams forgets that John the Baptist was also filled with the Holy Spirit right from his mother's womb. The angel who appeared to Zacharias said of John the Baptist: 'For he will be great in the sight of

the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb' (Luke 1:15).

If God could fill John the Baptist, who was conceived the natural way, with the Holy Spirit, why would He not do that to His incarnated Son? Indeed, Elizabeth was barren. John's conception was thus a miraculous one. However, it was still a natural conception in the sense that it involved the union of a sperm and an ovum, but in Jesus' case, there was no sperm involved. Although Erickson (2013:686, 688) opines that God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum, it is actually unlikely that this was really the case. What the Bible reveals is that Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing beyond that. It is a mystery that will remain so for all time.

The idea of Jesus Christ being filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb was not unique to Him alone. John the Baptist experienced the same. However, John the Baptist was conceived in the natural way – He did not enter this world through the incarnation and therefore he needed a saviour as soon as he was born. As a matter of fact, I suggest that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb on God's promissory note that Jesus was going to provide salvation through His birth, life, death, and resurrection – for the people who receive the Holy Spirit are those who have repented of their sins and have experienced the new birth (cf. John 3:3, 5; Acts 2:36-39). However, in the case of John the Baptist, it is not explained how it was that God filled him with the Holy Spirit right from his mother's womb. For Jesus, the issue seems to be self-explanatory, since He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. He was not a sinner in need of a saviour from birth. He was the God-Man. He was a unique being – no longer only God, and also not only a human being. He was the only being to ever exist with two natures. He assumed a post-fall human nature, both spiritually and physically, and He was unique.

Why did God fill Jesus with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb, while He did not do the same for others? This question can be answered by asking another question: Why did God fill John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit right from his mother's womb, while He did not do the same for others? Why was John the Baptist that privileged? The Bible has



chosen to remain silent on this matter. However, I want to suggest that Jesus came on a mission to save human beings. He had only one mission: To save human beings. Therefore, God saw it fit that He should be filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb. John the Baptist was probably privileged to be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, because of his very important mission of heralding the coming of the Messiah. God knew what would be at stake, since Satan was going to enlist his entire army of highly trained and deceptive rebels against both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Whatever might have been the reason for that, it remains true that God filled John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb. The Son of Man was also filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb.

### **15.6.2.3 He Shared in the Same Flesh and Blood**

As I was doing this research, I saw Hebrews 2:14-15 in a new light. I studied it together with 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. I saw something that I had not seen before. Studied in light of 1 Corinthians 15:50-57, Hebrews 2:14-15 suggests a post-fall nature of Jesus' humanity. Hebrews 2:14-15 says: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh (σάρκός) and blood (αἵματος), He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'.

It is possible to interpret this text in two ways. The first interpretation would be that Jesus assumed a human nature so that He might become subject to death. While also being God, He could not die. He therefore needed to assume a human nature, because it is only a human nature that is mortal. In other words, Jesus assumed a mortal human nature, but not necessarily a post-fall human nature.

However, the pre-fall Adam was not mortal, although there was potential mortality in him. What do I mean by potential mortality? Adam was created with conditional immortality. God said to him: 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen 2:16-17). This means that if Adam did not eat of the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil, he would not die. Eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil would necessarily make the potential mortality a reality. It happened just like that when Adam disobeyed God (cf. Gen 3:17-19). Adam did not live to be even 1,000 years old. The Bible asserts: 'So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died' (Gen 5:5). The first person, however, who died, was Adam's second born son, Abel (cf. Gen 4:8). Death had become a reality.

That human beings were created with conditional immortality is implied in God's reason for quarantining Adam and Eve and guarding the way to the tree of life: 'The LORD God said: "Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" – therefore, the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So, He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life' (Gen 3:22-24). Ever since that time, there was no other immortal human being on earth. The NT is very clear that immortality belongs only to God: 'Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen'; and 'I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Jesus Christ who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen' (1 Tim 1:17; 6:13-16).

So far, I have only discussed mortality as it relates to physical death, and immortality as opposed to physical death. Jesus Christ, however, died an eternal death or what the book of Revelation calls the 'second death' (cf. Rev 20:6, 14; 21:8). Because God created us to live forever, we dread death. Generally, human nature fears to die a physical death, because that is the only death that we are familiar with. Nevertheless, the death that we really fear, even though we may not be consciously aware of it, is the second death. This is the death that the author of the letter to the Hebrews was thinking of as he wrote

Hebrews 2:14-15. Jesus Christ shared in the same flesh and blood, 'that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'. In this light, Paul wrote: 'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons' (Gal 4:4-5).

It should be noted that, when Paul discussed death and resurrection, he did not show the difference between a physical and eternal death. He did not distinguish between resurrection from a physical death, and resurrection from an eternal death. Only the context can help to correctly interpret his arguments. In my opinion, Jesus Christ died the eternal death, which is actually the wages of sin (cf. Rom 6:23). This means that, when He rose from the grave, He rose from eternal death, but those who experience a physical death will rise from the physical death at Jesus' second coming. This will be possible, because Jesus Christ defeated eternal death through His death and resurrection. Those who accept Him as Saviour and Lord, will rise from their spiritual death (Eph 2:1-7), and therefore the second death will have no power on them, because they will experience the first resurrection (Rev 20:6).

The type of humanity that is subject to death is a post-fall humanity. Thus, 'flesh (σαρκός) and blood (αἵματος)' in Hebrews 2:14, which Jesus Christ partook of, is the 'flesh (σαρκός) and blood (αἵματος)' of a post-fall humanity. It was post-fall human beings, who were, since the fall of Adam and Eve, subject to bondage, because of fear of death. These were human beings who were spiritually and physically in a post-fall condition, who had a leaning, or propensity, or drive toward sin, and also a weak physical nature, which experienced thirst, hunger, weariness, sleep, aging, and the like. I contend, therefore, on the basis of Hebrews 2:14-15, that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature. In fact, it is the post-fall humanity that deserves to die the second death. It is therefore unthinkable that Jesus Christ would assume the spiritual nature of a pre-fall humanity, but die for a post-fall humanity. This would contradict the law of substitution. Jesus Christ had to assume a post-fall human nature, both spiritually and physically, in order for Him to

experience the second death on our behalf. The difference was that, while we *are* post-fall human beings, Jesus Christ *became* a post-fall human being. He *became* what He was not by native right. He *assumed* a post-fall human nature, in order to redeem it and cleanse it of all sin. This distinction should always be kept in mind as Christologists think about Jesus' post-fall human nature.

Concerning 1 Corinthians 15:50-57, Paul wrote: 'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh (σάρξ) and blood (αἷμα) cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption'. It is important to ask: Which 'flesh and blood' cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It is, of course, a post-fall human nature. If the post-fall human nature in 1 Corinthians 15:50 cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and this is the same 'flesh (σαρκός) and blood (αἵματος)', which Jesus Christ partook of (Heb 2:14), then Jesus Christ partook of a post-fall human nature. A question can be asked: Is this to suggest that He was in a state in which He could not inherit the kingdom of God? I must admit that this question is difficult to answer. My opinion, nevertheless, is that, while Jesus Christ assumed the very post-fall human nature that could not inherit the kingdom of God without glorification through the resurrection, He did not Himself commit any sin. He was always in an acceptable relationship with His Father. He was never in a state of alienation, even though the human nature He assumed was in a state of alienation. I noted that the statement, 'That which is born of the flesh (σαρκός) is flesh (σάρξ), and that which is born of the Spirit (πνεύματος) is spirit (πνεῦμά)' (John 3:6), did not apply to Jesus because, while He assumed the very fallen, sinful flesh that we all have, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. Therefore, He started with a fallen, sinful human nature, but filled with the Holy Spirit. Since He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, He was spirit. However, His nature needed to be rid of the tendency, or leaning, or propensity, or drive toward sin.

Jesus Christ was holy despite having assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that He found. The question that can be asked is: Is it possible to be holy inside a fallen, sinful human nature? The Bible gives an affirmative answer. In the first place, the body of a post-fall human being who has experienced the new birth is said to be the Holy Spirit's temple (1 Cor 6:19). The Holy Spirit is God. Therefore, God dwells in post-fall born-again

human beings, which means that post-fall born-again human beings are holy. It is therefore possible to be holy in a post-fall human nature. This is not to suggest that, when we receive the new birth, we are rid of the tendency to sin. The law of sin remains in us until the second coming of Jesus, when we will be changed. However, with the law of sin still dwelling in us, we are holy. The flesh remains sinful, while we are ourselves holy. This is an absolute paradox.

Writing to born-again post-fall human beings, Peter stated: 'Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, *"Be holy, for I am holy"*' (1 Pet 1:13-16). God expects Jesus' followers to be holy. He declared them holy (justification) in order that they might be holy (sanctification) and they will be made holy in nature at His second coming (glorification).

The point is this: If born-again post-fall human beings can be morally holy, while they still have their fallen, sinful human nature, was it impossible for the incarnate Jesus to be morally holy, while bearing the fallen, sinful human nature that He assumed? I conclude that Jesus Christ assumed a fallen, sinful human nature, but was holy. However, while born-again post-fall human beings can be holy while still within a fallen, sinful human nature, there is a difference between their holy state and Jesus'. They have been washed from the sins they committed, while Jesus never committed any sin throughout His life. Their holiness is relative, while Jesus' holiness is absolute. Jesus started in a state of moral holiness and continued in that state to the very end of His ministry on earth. We start in a precarious situation of being unholy but become holy when we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. We may sometimes commit sin (1 John 2:1-2).

What about corruptibility to which Paul referred in 1 Corinthians 15:50? My view is that there is a physical and a moral or spiritual corruptibility. Physical corruptibility refers to physical decay, as our bodies do experience decay. I believe that, similarly, Jesus' body

was capable of undergoing decay. However, it did not undergo decay, because God prevented it from undergoing decay. Peter discussed this in Acts 2:22-35, where he talked about the resurrection of Jesus, quoting Psalm 16:8-11. God prevented corruption (decay) to come to Jesus' body by resurrecting Him. In other words, if Jesus had not been a unique Person (the God-Man) and had not been resurrected, He would also have experienced decay. His body would have decomposed in much the same way that we experience decay when we die. However, Jesus was on a mission. He was not to stay in the grave. He had to rise and go back to heaven to begin another phase of His ministry. Because He had not committed any sin, eternal death could not keep Him in the grave.

This is a very difficult subject that can also be regarded as a mystery. I am dealing with a paradox. If Jesus' body had undergone decay, what would have happened to His divinity? He was not two persons in one, but one Person with two natures. Therefore, what would have happened to His divinity, if His body had decomposed? Perhaps this question can be answered by another question: What happened to His divinity when He died on Calvary's cross? It was quiescent. It was also quiescent in the grave, until the time of the resurrection. I want to suggest that we have to simply accept the fact that the Bible suggests that God prevented a physical corruption to come to Jesus' body and raised Him from the grave. Decay did not take place. Therefore, we must leave what is inexplicable to God. The point is that Jesus' body was capable of decay. Paul discussed this in Acts 13:30-37, specifically verse 36: 'For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption [decay]; but He [Jesus] whom God raised up saw no corruption [decay]'.

Another question is about moral corruptibility. The post-fall human nature is spiritually corrupt or depraved. Did Jesus have a spiritually corrupt nature? In the letters of Paul, spiritual or moral corruptibility is mentioned several times, like in Ephesians 4:29: 'Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers'. In this world there are actually 'men of corrupt minds' (1 Tim 6:5). Paul wrote: 'Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith' (2 Tim 3:8).

Followers of Jesus ‘may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust’ (2 Pet 1:4).

We are all born with a spiritually corrupt or depraved nature. This makes it difficult to exempt Jesus’ human nature of this corruptibility or depravity, because He received His humanity from Mary who was herself corruptible or depraved. Erickson (2013:689) admits: ‘Without that special sanctifying influence [of the Holy Spirit], he [Jesus] would have possessed the same depraved nature that all of us have’. However, since (in my opinion) the Holy Spirit did not prevent a transmission of depravity or corruption from Mary to Jesus, I suggest that He assumed a corruptible human nature. As I have already stated, though, He was Himself not corrupt, for He did not act corruptibly. He lived above the desires of a corrupt or depraved human nature. He assumed a sin-sick human nature, but He was not Himself spiritually sick. I believe I have ably clarified the difference between the Jesus who *assumed* a post-fall human nature and the rest of us who *have* a post-fall human nature.

#### **15.6.2.4 The Law of Substitution Suggests a Post-fall Human Nature**

I will not give a detailed discussion of the idea of substitution, because I already discussed it when I was evaluating Sequeira’s post-fall model of Jesus’ human nature. It was actually the subject of my study at master’s level (UNISA MTh dissertation, 2015). The point I want to raise is that, in order for Jesus to qualify to be our substitute, He needed to assume our post-fall human nature, both spiritually and physically. Had He assumed a different human nature, He would not have been the post-fall humanity’s substitute. Because He became one of us in nature, it can be argued that He ‘bore ours sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed’ (1 Pet 2:24). As our substitute, ‘Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit’ (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus’ temptation also suggests a post-fall human nature.

### 15.6.2.5 He was Tempted as We are

Hebrews 4:15 avers: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin'. This text suggests that Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature, for He would not have been tempted as we are if He had assumed a pre-fall human nature. It is possible to think of the text as suggesting that Jesus was tempted in the same way that human beings are tempted, that is, to say NO to God. However, since the fall of Adam and Eve, which is recorded in Genesis 3, there has been only one type of human nature – a fallen, sinful human nature. Jesus was tempted to say NO to God and YES to Satan. Nevertheless, we are also tempted to say NO to God in a fallen, sinful human nature. The author of the letter to the Hebrews had a born-again post-fall human being in mind in Hebrews 4:15. Therefore, Jesus must have been tempted in the post-fall human nature that He has assumed. To suggest that He was tempted in a pre-fall human nature is to suggest that He only was the pre-fall Adam's example in overcoming temptation. Born-again post-fall human beings need an example in overcoming temptation, one who struggled with the tendency to sin as they do, but who did not succumb to temptation. Jesus was such an example. However, His temptation was more intense than what born-again post-fall human beings have and will ever experience, because He had an inherent divine power, which He could have easily appealed to, had He chosen to do it. We do not have an inherent divine power. We are tempted to let go of our new life in Jesus and to get back to our old ways. Jesus was tempted to let go of His external divine power and to depend on His inherent divine power. Because of the post-fall human nature that He had assumed, the temptation was really tough for Him. This is where Jesus' life was a mystery. How did He overcome temptation in the post-fall human nature He assumed? If He did, then His born-again followers can do it by relying on the power from above. I am not proposing the heresy of *absolute sinlessness* or *perfectionism* – I am simply suggesting that born-again followers of Jesus can overcome temptation through Him, who has set an example for them to follow. This is not legalism, but walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 17).

With respect to the issue of how post-fall human beings are tempted, I believe that James 1:13-15 applies to Jesus, except that, in His case, the desires of the fallen, sinful flesh



that He assumed, did not turn into sin. He never got tainted by sin, as He maintained His purity of life in thought, word, and action. He lived above sin in the very post-fall human nature that He assumed. Related to the concept of temptation is the idea of Jesus being an example to born-again believers in suffering.

#### **15.6.2.6 He is the Believer's Example in Suffering**

Jesus' followers experience a lot of suffering simply because they have chosen to follow Him. Paul asserted: 'For to you it has been granted on behalf of Jesus, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake' (Phil 1:29). To Timothy he wrote: 'Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Jesus Christ will suffer persecution' (2 Tim 3:12). It is therefore encouraging to discover that Jesus Christ experienced suffering as well. Peter stated: 'For to this you were called, because Jesus also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps' (1 Pet 2:21). In 1 Peter 3:18, Peter added: 'For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit' (1 Pet 3:18). In his theology, Peter moved from the concept of Jesus' suffering – because of being God's servant – to suffering as our substitute. My concern is not Jesus' substitutionary suffering, but His suffering as God's servant.

It is my contention that, for Jesus Christ to be the believer's example in suffering for being God's servant, He needed to assume a post-fall human nature. It does not make sense to argue that Jesus Christ was our example in suffering when His human nature was different from ours. There is something in us that resists suffering. The tendency to sin, that we inherited from our parents, is a real hindrance when it comes to accepting God's will for us, especially if it involves suffering. I conclude, therefore, that Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature, without which He would not have been the believer's example in suffering. His experience in Gethsemane suggests that He has assumed a post-fall human nature.

### 15.6.2.7 Jesus' Gethsemane Experience

I have noted that the tendency to sin, which we are all born with, tends to go its own way in opposition to God's will. We do not have an example in the Bible of a person who experienced suffering in a sinless human nature. We also do not have an example in the NT of a person, apart from Jesus Christ, who had the Gethsemane experience. I believe that the Gethsemane experience was unique, for it represented what those who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord will experience. It was the beginning of the sense of separation that Jesus Christ sensed which culminated into His cry on Calvary's cross: 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*) (Matt 27:46).

In Gethsemane, He prayed three times, desiring to escape the cross which represented the second death – an eternal separation from God. However, He added that He wanted God's will to prevail (Matt 26:39, 42, 44). In my view, this experience does not represent a struggle of one with a pre-fall spiritual nature. The pre-fall human beings lived in harmony with God and, while it is a fact that they committed sin in a nature that was in harmony with God's will, what they did was unnatural. Equally, if Satan had tempted Jesus to do an unnatural thing, His victory would not really have been something amazing – it would have been a victory that everyone expected. Since scholars who espouse the pre-fall or alternative model of Jesus' human nature suggest that Jesus assumed a post-fall physical nature, it makes sense to argue that His physical nature was resisting when facing the cross. However, scholars are divided on the subject of the death of Jesus. There are some scholars who claim that Jesus Christ experienced a physical death. Erickson, as I have noted in this study is one of them. Other scholars argue that Jesus Christ experienced the second death – Sequeira and Gulley are good examples. I believe that Jesus Christ experienced the second death.

If He experienced the second death, then His struggle was more about the flesh trying to escape the cross. Luke (the doctor) related: 'And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (Luke 22:44). This is amazing. People do not seem to dread a physical death to this

extent. Socrates, for example, is said to have waited joyfully for his death. Some of the martyrs of Jesus Christ died singing praises to the Son of David. However, the Bible relates that Jesus Christ 'offered up prayers and supplication, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear' (Heb 5:7). Naturally, God did not take away the cup of suffering, but instead, He sent an angel to strengthen Jesus (Luke 22:43). What was unique about the cross of Jesus? I propose that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature, both spiritually and physically. I believe that, in Gethsemane, it was the flesh which Jesus Christ had assumed – our fallen, sinful flesh – that tried to escape the cross. However, because He had resolved to fulfil God's will, He accepted God's will to be done. There is another aspect of Jesus' suffering that I need to discuss, which supports a post-fall model of His human nature. It is related to Jesus' temptation and His Gethsemane experience.

#### **15.6.2.8 Jesus Christ Suffered in the Flesh**

Peter wrote: 'For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit' (1 Pet 3:18). This refers to Jesus' substitutionary death – He suffered because of our sins and died on the cross in our place. However, there is another statement that Peter made: 'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God' (1 Pet 4:1-3).

It is my opinion that Jesus did not just suffer on the cross – He suffered throughout His life. I believe that, whenever Satan brought a temptation to Him, the flesh wanted to resist God's will, but because His mind was set on pleasing His Father, He did not succumb to Satan's temptations. Because He has decided not to fulfil the dictates of His flesh, Jesus suffered in that flesh. The flesh was deprived of what it desired. John gave a summary of what is involved in temptation when he admonished his readers/hearers: 'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the

lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever' (1 John 2:15-17). I believe that Jesus' wilderness temptations involved 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' (cf. Matt 4:1-11). I believe that Jesus Christ had to defeat these desires of the flesh in much the same way that born-again post-fall human beings have to do it. The author of the letter to the Hebrews argued that, 'though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him' (Heb 5:8, 9). Jesus Christ learned obedience throughout His earthly life and not just on the cross.

When it comes to born-again believers, they experience this struggle. Paul put it this way: 'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish' (Gal 5:16, 17). Paul noted that 'those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit' (Rom 8:5). Those who live according to the Spirit, suffer in the flesh. It is my contention that, had Jesus' suffering involved only His experience on the cross, Peter would not have admonished the people he wrote to, to arm themselves to suffer in the flesh. In fact, he suggested that 'he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin'. This suggests to me that, when I do not fulfil the lusts of my flesh, I will suffer in that same flesh. Thus, I will stop sinning, because the flesh will be under the control of the Holy Spirit working through my mind. I will no longer live the rest of my time in the flesh for the lust of men, but for the will of God.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, I propose that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature. It was only a nature indwelt by the law of sin that would experience the kind of suffering that Peter suggested. I will now focus my attention on Jesus Christ's qualification to the office of High Priest.

#### **15.6.2.9 Jesus Christ had to Qualify to be Our High Priest**

To become our sympathetic High Priest, Jesus Christ needed to assume the very human nature that He found. He needed to be taken from among His own people. He needed to

share in their experiences, except in sin in performance. Hebrews 5:1-4 gives us the qualifications of the earthly high priest, some of which applied to Jesus: 'For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted' (Heb 2:16-18). Aiding people with a post-fall human nature is different from aiding those with a pre-fall nature. In fact, pre-fall human beings never needed a High Priest. Jesus Christ as High Priest gives aid to the seed of Abraham. By the 'seed of Abraham', the author of the letter to the Hebrews had in mind, Jesus' followers (cf. Gal 3:7-9, 29). Galatians 3:29 states: 'And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise'. With regard to Hebrews 2:16-18, the apostle Paul referred to biological born-again descendants of Abraham.

It is important to note that generally, Abraham's descendants are born-again post-fall followers of Jesus. If Jesus was made like His brethren in all things, and His brethren have post-fall human nature, it follows that He has also assumed a post-fall human nature. It was for this reason that the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote boldly: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb 4:15, 16).

To summarise, I have given nine reasons why I believe that Jesus Christ assumed a post-fall human nature. All these reasons are based on the NT data. I believe that even though there seems to be no direct NT statement to suggest that Jesus has assumed a post-fall human nature, it is implied in all the texts that I have discussed. The pre-fall or alternative model of Jesus Christ's human nature is not supported by the NT data. Therefore, I propose that the post-fall model of Jesus' human nature should be endorsed by all biblical scholars. I will now discuss the concept of heredity.

## **15.7 The Concept of Heredity in the Context of the Incarnation**

With the concept of heredity in mind, it is impossible to exempt Jesus Christ from the law of sin that all descendants of Adam and Eve are born with. I will begin by discussing the physical inheritable characteristics and then proceed to discuss our spiritual heredity.

### **15.7.1 The Incarnation and Physical Heredity**

It is a well-known fact that Jesus Christ got His humanity from His mother alone. It is also a well-known fact that Jesus Christ was male. From the knowledge of genetics that I have acquired, for a person to be male, his father must contribute a Y chromosome, while his mother must contribute an X chromosome. In other words, when the sperm fertilises the ovum, a Y chromosome from it pairs with the X chromosome from the ovum. Jesus Christ's case does not seem to have followed this genetic rule, because there was no sperm that fertilised Mary's ovum. A question arises: How is it possible that Jesus Christ was a male without a male factor in His conception?

A human being has 46 chromosomes: 22 autosomes and one sex chromosome come from the mother, while the other 22 autosomes and one sex chromosome come from the father. If Jesus Christ got 22 autosomes and one sex (X) chromosome from His mother, where did He get the other 22 autosomes and one sex (Y) chromosome?

I have noted in this study that Erickson (2013:686, 688) suggests that God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum, otherwise Jesus Christ would have been her clone and necessarily female. When evaluating Erickson's Christology, I argued that it is unlikely that God created a sperm specifically for the incarnation. The God who created the first human being from dust and put 46 chromosomes (44 autosomes and 2 sex chromosomes) in him, could not have limited Himself to genetic rules when it came to the incarnation. He did not have to create a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum to form Jesus. Although Erickson's proposal is philosophically tenable, it is unlikely that God created a sperm to fertilise Mary's ovum.

If I were to give my own speculation of what God probably did, I would suggest that, using material from Mary, He created the body of Jesus Christ with every genetic material found in human beings – He put 46 chromosomes (44 autosomes and 2 sex chromosomes) in Him. The sex chromosomes He put in Jesus Christ were the ones that all male human beings have – the XY pair of chromosomes. Mary, however, had only two X sex chromosomes. Where did the Y chromosome come from? I do not think that we should discuss the incarnation in terms of a biological process. When God created Eve from Adam's material, He put 46 chromosomes (44 autosomes and 2 sex chromosomes) in her. The sex chromosomes He put in Mary were the ones that all female human beings have – the XX pair of chromosomes. God created a female human being from a male human being. He is God – He can do whatever pleases Him and is in line with His plan. His intelligence and wisdom are beyond comprehension. Therefore, it is possible that, using Mary's material alone, God was able to create Jesus Christ's body with everything that pertains to a male human being. He prepared an umbilical cord and attached it to Mary's placenta. This is merely a possibility of what God did at the incarnation. It is possible that He did not do this, but something else. The Bible does not reveal what He did, probably because that knowledge is not necessary for our salvation.

The suggestion I have made, ensures that Jesus Christ inherited the same fallen, sinful human nature that Mary had. The reasons for this have already been discussed above. I will again explain this in detail when discussing spiritual heredity.

In terms of the physical aspects of Jesus Christ, such as skin colour, earlobe, height, hair, and the like, it is difficult to explain how He acquired them from a genetic point of view. It can be argued that if Jesus Christ was born a Jew, as the Bible suggests (cf. Matt 1:18-21; Luke 1:26-38; John 4:42), then His physical features are like those of the Jews of His day. However, the rules of genetics suggest that these physical aspects are inherited from both parents. Thus, it is difficult to explain the incarnation in genetic terms. Nevertheless, it can be speculated that using material from Mary, God created the body of Jesus with the physical features like those of a Jew of His day. This implies that His skin colour was like that of the Jews of His day.

That Jesus' skin colour is probably like that of the Jews of His day, is supported by Oliver (2014:112), when he conveys that '[Jesus] was most probably of the same colour as his parents and disciples – and that was a stark off-white colour'. He relates: 'Abraham's ancestors were of colour, but we may refer to them as reddish or light brown, as Abraham and his children became Chosen people of God. One can therefore derive that Jesus, one of the descendants of Abraham, who was born in a Middle-eastern community, also was of colour' (Oliver 2014:112). While I do not agree with some of the sources Oliver relies on in his article, his conclusion makes sense. Of course, the issue of colour is not important in God's plan of salvation, but it is important to discuss it in our contemporary time, because it has become a political issue, and somehow affects how people respond to the everlasting gospel.

It is my contention, therefore, that Christologists should leave the incarnation where the Bible leaves it (Matt 1:20, 21; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14). They must simply accept the fact that the second Person of the Godhead assumed a human nature. While I believe that God ordained the rules of genetics right at the creation, I propose that these rules did not limit Him to create Jesus as He wished to do.

### **15.7.2 The Incarnation and Spiritual Heredity**

Gulley and Erickson suggest that the law of heredity did not apply to Jesus Christ where His spiritual nature was concerned. Erickson (2013:689) suggests that the special sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented sin in nature from being transmitted from Mary to Jesus. Otherwise, Jesus would have been born with the same depraved nature that we have. Gulley (2012:428) suggests that Jesus was immaculately conceived in Mary's womb. In other words, he is in harmony with Erickson in his view that sin in nature somehow did not find its way from Mary's nature to Jesus'. In Adventist circles, this thought was promoted by Heppenstall:

Sin is a spiritual thing caused by the alienation of the whole person from God. We cannot apply this alienated condition to Christ. He was not born as we are, separate from God. He was God Himself. He could inherit from Mary only what could be transmitted



genetically. This means He inherited the weakened physical constitution, the results of sin upon the body, that we all inherit. As concerning all other men, they are born without God. All men need regeneration. Christ did not. Here lies the great difference between Christ and ourselves (Heppenstall 1977:126).

This argument is similar to Gulley's and Erickson's. It stems from the premise that, since all descendants of Adam are born in need of a saviour, Jesus did not inherit a post-fall spiritual nature, for had He done so, He would Himself have been a sinner in need of a saviour. There is no convincing explanation as to how Jesus Christ escaped the transmission of sin in nature from Mary. Although it is proposed that the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit prevented the transmission of sin in nature from Mary to Jesus Christ, I have already noted that this is a very unsatisfactory explanation.

Biblical anthropology suggests that human beings are a whole. It follows that if the effects of sin are transferable, the same should be true of sin as a power (Zurcher 1999:200). Heppenstall does not argue that sin as a power is not transferable. Instead, he argues that it is not transmitted genetically, but spiritually.

Geneticists do not study the transmission of sin. They study the physical aspects of heredity. It is thus difficult to explain genetically how sin in nature is transmitted from parents to their children. I do not believe that there is a sin gene. However, I believe that God created humankind in such a way that sin would negatively affect us, spiritually and physically. This is exactly what happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. We are born with weak physical bodies and a spiritual nature that leans toward sin. I believe that Jesus Christ received the same nature from Mary. I have already explained, however, that He was unique, despite having assumed the very fallen, sinful human nature that we all possess. Since Jesus simply assumed that which was not His by native right, He could not be a sinner in need of a saviour. He was not conceived in the natural way, but entered this world through the incarnation. He was the God-Man – the only being to ever exist with two natures. He was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb.

Therefore, what is genetically transmitted from parents to their children, was also transmitted by Adam and Eve after they have fallen into sin. Attributes like skin colour, hair colour, height, earlobes, and the like, are genetically transmitted from parents to their children. In other words, the genetic mechanism that works in human beings was part of God's creation. I believe that God knew that we were going to sin, and therefore He created the genetic mechanism in such a way that we would easily adapt to the conditions that would prevail on earth after the entrance of sin. This would probably partly explain, for example, why we have different skin colours today, although it is a highly debatable issue. In other words, the omniscient God who knew that humankind would sin, created us in such a way that our skin colours would adapt in the environments where we would find ourselves. The point to note however, is that we do not know exactly why we have different skin colours when we actually descended from one person (cf. Acts 17:26).

Sin negatively affected even the genetic mechanism. This is why some health conditions are genetically transmitted from parents to their children. For example, sickle-cell disease, which is a genetic abnormality, is genetically transmitted (Enger & Ross 2003:174). If being born with four fingers and one thumb is what God intended for human beings, then I was born with an abnormality – I was born with five fingers and one thumb on both sides. My first-born son has five fingers and one thumb on one side. My daughter inherited my abnormality in totality, for her case is just like mine. I see genetics at play in my children. However, it is genetics working in post-fall human beings. Spiritually, I believe that I have transmitted my fallen, sinful nature to my children.

I believe that, if Adam and Eve had not fallen into sin, their descendants would have each inherited a sinless nature. They would have been born spiritually alive. However, just like the genetic mechanism was negatively affected by sin, to the extent that we even inherit undesirable physical aspects from our parents, our spiritual nature was negatively affected by sin, to the extent that we transmit a sinful nature to our descendants. The reason *why* sin originated is a mystery – it cannot be explained. If we were to explain why sin originated, we would probably condone it. However, we can explain *what* it is, and *how* it originated. The incarnation is also a mystery – it cannot be explained. Whether sin

is transmitted spiritually or genetically is not the real issue. The real issue is that sin entered this world and no descendant of Adam and Eve has escaped it. It seems that in order to deal with this problem of sin once and for all, God had to let the laws of heredity apply to His Son, to the extent that Jesus assumed a nature indwelt by the law of sin. This is what this study has revealed.

It is my contention, therefore, that Jesus Christ has assumed a post-fall human nature. However, since He was at first only eternally God and was not conceived in the natural way, the term 'unique' must be added to the post-fall model of Jesus' humanity. Therefore, I propose what I have called a *unique, post-fall (postlapsarian)* model of Jesus' human nature. This model takes seriously the contexts of both the pre-fall and post-fall natures of humanity. It satisfactorily explains how Jesus Christ dealt with the dual problem of sin. Using this model, makes it easier to explain the substitutionary atonement than the other model discussed in this study. In light of this model, it makes sense to argue that Jesus Christ is the believer's example in overcoming temptation, obedience, and suffering. It also makes sense to argue that Jesus Christ is now the believer's sympathetic High Priest, ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. Having proposed my model of Jesus Christ' human nature, I will make some recommendations.

### **15.8 Recommendations**

Since the humanity of Jesus is a heavily debated subject, and in view of the findings of this study, I make the following recommendations:

- The landmark statement formulated at Nicaea should be preserved to continue to serve as a reference point in our study of the history of Christology.
- The landmark statement formulated at Chalcedon should be revised so that unbiblical elements are removed from it.
- The Bible should guide Christologists when formulating their models of Jesus' human nature.
- When formulating their models of Jesus' human nature, Christologists should seriously consider the contexts of the nature of humankind before the entrance of sin and the nature of humankind after the entrance of sin, since as I have noted in

this thesis, Jesus was incarnated to take post-fall humanity back to the state of pre-fall humanity. In this way they will realise that pre-fall humanity does not apply to any person who has entered this world after the entrance of sin, including Jesus.

- God's mission of saving fallen, sinful human beings, should guide Christologists as they formulate their models of Jesus' human nature.
- When formulating their models of Jesus' human nature, Christologists should not be guided by the statement, 'every descendant of Adam and Eve is born a sinner in need of a saviour', since Jesus Christ was at first only eternally God, and therefore His entrance into this world as a human being was unique.
- When formulating their models of Jesus' human nature, Christologists should not venture into biological processes, for the incarnation was a mystery and will remain a mystery for all ages.
- Seventh-day Adventists to whom this recommendation applies, should admit that their view of Jesus' human nature is pre-fall or prelapsarian as this study has shown, and that this is actually the view espoused by Evangelicals.

## **15.9 Conclusion**

This study has established that Gulley's alternative or unique or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall' model of Jesus' human nature is actually also the one proposed by Erickson. Gulley and Erickson are proponents of what can be called a unique, pre-fall (prelapsarian) model of Jesus' human nature. There does not seem to be a strictly pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature, for such a model would have meant that Jesus has assumed Adam's pre-fall nature, both spiritually and physically – a view that Gulley and Erickson correctly do not support. Evangelical scholars such as Thiessen and Grudem are in harmony with Erickson's pre-fall model of Jesus' human nature. SDA scholars such as Webster and Adams argue that the alternative or unique or 'neither pre-fall nor post-fall model' of Jesus' human nature proposed by Gulley and a number of other Adventist scholars, is post-fall. However, this study has established that, since this model omits 'propensities or drives caused as a result of Adam's fall' from Jesus' human nature, it is pre-fall. Therefore, this study concludes that the Adventist model of Jesus' human nature in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists 2005) and *Hand-*

*book of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000) is pre-fall and not post-fall as some Adventist scholars claim. Thus, in harmony with the Adventist history of Christology, which reveals that they had conversations with Evangelicals 1955-1956, resulting in Adventists revising their model (although not in an official statement) to reflect the popular Evangelical Christological model, this study concludes that many Adventists are proponents of the Evangelical model of Jesus' human nature as represented by Erickson.

I have noted that both Gulley's and Erickson's model of Jesus' human nature is not consistent with the NT data. It fails to adequately resolve the dual problem of sin and makes Jesus the pre-fall Adam's substitute. This model also makes Jesus the pre-fall Adam's example in temptation, obedience, and suffering. In this model, Jesus becomes the pre-fall Adam's High Priest. It suggests that Jesus had three natures: A divine nature, a pre-fall spiritual human nature, and a post-fall physical human nature. I have therefore rejected that model.

Sequeira's post-fall (postlapsarian) model of Jesus' human nature reflects the NT data better than Gulley's and Erickson's pre-fall model. In Sequeira's model, Jesus is a post-fall Adam's substitute. The model adequately resolves the dual problem of sin. In this model Jesus is the post-fall Adam's example in temptation, obedience, and suffering. This model also suggests that Jesus is the post-fall Adam's High Priest. It preserves the biblical teaching that Jesus had two natures.

I have observed, however that, since Jesus became what He was not by native right, it is important to revise the post-fall model of His human nature so that it reflects this fact. Jesus was not conceived in the natural way, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was not born spiritually dead but was filled with the Holy Spirit right from His mother's womb. He was the God-Man. He was and still remains the only human being who is also God, with the divine and human natures blended in such a way that, while they remain distinct, He is not two persons in one, but one Person with two natures. Although He assumed a human nature, which was indwelt by the law of sin, He did not commit any sin throughout

His life. Thus, I have proposed what I have called a *unique, post-fall (postlapsarian) model of Jesus' human nature*.

In this study, I have argued that Christologists should not be restricted by the creedal statements formulated at Nicaea and Chalcedon, for they reflect the views of the theologians of the first five centuries of the Christian Church and not necessarily what the Bible teaches. Christologists should freely study the NT in light of the OT and decide for themselves what the Bible conveys about Jesus' human nature. Taking both the pre-fall and post-fall human natures into consideration, they will be able to appreciate God's solution to the dual problem of sin, which actually involved the incarnation of the second Person of the Godhead.

It is good to meet science with science, and philosophy with philosophy. However, the incarnation seemingly did not follow this mode of reasoning. It is therefore a mystery, as it cannot be explained from a genetic point of view. Therefore, this study contends that, while the Bible suggests that the law of heredity applied to Jesus' entrance into this world, since the Holy Spirit prepared Jesus' body in Mary's womb, Christologists should refrain from speculating about how God brought about the existence of a male human being without the involvement of the male factor. No one, except God, knows what really happened in Mary's womb. It is enough that the Bible tells us that Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is enough that Jesus Christ was a male human being with XY sex chromosomes and 22 pairs of autosomes. We know from genetics that the female parent provides 23 chromosomes and the male parent provides another 23 chromosomes so that the offspring has a total of 46 chromosomes. We also know from genetics that the mother provides an X chromosome while the father provides a Y chromosome to produce a male child. In Jesus' case, it is possible to speculate that Mary provided the X chromosome, although it was unlikely, since the incarnation is not about biological processes. We do not know where the Y chromosome came from, but we know that God, who created Adam from dust and Eve using bone and flesh taken from Adam's side, is not limited by the laws of genetics, which He Himself created. Just like Eve was created using Adam's material alone, but was not Adam's clone, Jesus Christ was created from Mary's material

alone, but was not her clone. Therefore, it is wrong to speculate about what God did at the incarnation, simply to make the incarnation philosophically acceptable.

The unique, post-fall model of Jesus' human nature that I have proposed in this study preserves the uniqueness of Jesus. I have contended that Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature without being a sinner in need of a saviour. I have also contended that it is possible to teach that Jesus assumed a post-fall human nature, without getting into the trap of perfectionism or absolute sinlessness in nature and performance. It is possible to be a post-fall Christologist and still advocate Jesus' absolute perfection and the believer's relative perfection. Sequeira does this in his Christology. I equally espouse the post-fall view of Jesus' human nature, but I do not support the 'holy flesh' heresy and the so-called believer's 'absolute perfection'. I totally reject legalism. Jesus is our Saviour before He is our Example. He had to save us before He could be our Example. He is our substitute before He is our Example. This is my view of salvation in light of Jesus' unique post-fall human nature that I have proposed in this study.

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