

"Watchman, what of the night?"

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
he hour and the end!"* *Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)*



Questions on Doctrine's Position on - **The Incarnation**

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Editor's Preface

The research done by Dr. Ralph Larson, Dr. J. R. Zurcher, and this editor, on the history of the doctrine of the Incarnation as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its beginning until the 1940s, has been recognized in the Annotated Edition of *Questions on Doctrine* as valid, not by name, but by the fact that Dr. George Knight admits that the Adventist Conferees lied to Barnhouse and Martin as to what the Church actually taught on the doctrine during this period of time. Of course, Knight uses more genteel language to describe the lying and cover-up.

In this issue of WVN we discuss the teachings of the 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine* on the Incarnation: 1) that Christ accepted the fallen human nature "vicariously" and 2) that He was "exempt" from its liabilities. But the admission that these were new and different positions from the historic teaching does not solve the problem. Knight substitutes a concept set forth by an Anglican clergyman, noted as the "orthodox position," in the place of the deviations which the 1957 edition made, but which still continues to negate the original teaching itself. Actually, this Anglican's position was first stated in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, published by the Ministerial Association in 1988. The White Estate is also involved.

In the new Annotated Edition we are faced with two problems: 1) What the "Annotations" do say, and 2) the sections of the 1957 edition for which this new edition does not give annotations but which are still open to serious questions, even as they were when the book was first published. Knight has simply done an incomplete job. There are still too many missing pieces, including the original answers given to the Evangelicals. Other questions are raised in "A Postscript," which require further explanation.

The Incarnation

As Presented in Questions on Doctrine

The authors of the 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine* cited the prophecy of Isaiah 53:3-4, and Matthew's reference to it (8:17) as the basis for their first premise in regard to the Incarnation. After quoting Isaiah, that the Messiah would be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and Matthew's interpretive comment – "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," they wrote:

But let us observe further what is implied in this. Notice the words used to express the thought, both in Isaiah 53 and Matthew 8. He bore our *griefs*, our *sorrows*, our *infirmities*, our *sicknesses*. The original words are also translated *pains*, *diseases*, and *weaknesses* (p. 58).

After quoting references from the Writings, they continued:

It could hardly be construed, however, from the record of either Isaiah or Matthew, that Jesus was diseased or that he experienced the frailties to which our fallen human nature is heir. But He did *bear* all this. Could it not be that he bore this *vicariously* also, just as He bore the sins of the whole world?

These weaknesses, frailties, infirmities, failings are things which we, with our sinful, fallen natures, have to bear. To us they are natural, inherent, but when He bore them, He took them not as something innately His, but He bore them as our substitute. He bore them in His perfect, sinless nature. Again we remark, Christ bore all this vicariously, just as vicariously He bore the iniquities of us all (pp. 59-60; emphasis theirs).

Their second premise is bluntly stated:

Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was *exempt* from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam. He was "without sin," not only in His outward conduct, but (sic) in His very nature (p. 383; emphasis mine).

The two premises together are saying that although Christ took the fallen flesh of man – "born in the flesh" – He was "*exempt*" from that which made the flesh, "fallen" – its defilement.

I italicized, "exempt" because it has theological connotations. It was used by James Cardinal Gibbons in his explanation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Interpreting the Dogma's clause – "preserved free from every stain of original sin" – he wrote:

Unlike the rest of the children of Adam, the soul of Mary was never subject to sin, even in the first moment of its infusion into the body. She alone was *exempt* from the original taint (*Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 171, 88th edition; emphasis mine).

If Christ was "exempt" then there was a divine intervention. If not, then Christ's humanity received from Mary would be no different than the humanity of every other child of Adam. Roman Catholicism seeks to avoid this problem by making Mary "exempt." To escape another problem which would arise if Mary conceived a second time, but by Joseph, they deny that any other children were born to Mary.

There is one difference between Jesus Christ and others born into humanity. He had a pre-existent identity and individuality. He took "upon Himself" our fallen nature. Our identity and individuality is the result of the union of our father and mother thus bequeathing to us a fallen nature. We are born fallen; Christ was not. How a Divine pre-existent Being could begin as a fetus in the womb of Mary remains a mystery to both men and angels.

[Other questions also surface, which we will discuss in following issues of WWN. One of the Adventist conferees and "scribe" of the 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine*, L. E. Froom, wrote an unpublished manuscript on "The Virgin Birth," which seeks to address some of these questions. This, too, we hope to review in future issues of WWN.]

The Beginnings of the Conference

Barnhouse relates that on "a second visit, Martin was presented with scores of pages of detailed theological answers to his questions" (*Eternity*, September 1956, p. 6). Unruh reveals that the answers were written by Froom (*The Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1977, p. 38). What followed? Barnhouse reveals:

As Mr. Martin read their answers he came, for example, upon a statement that they repudiated absolutely the thought that seventh-day Sabbath keeping was a basis for salvation and a denial of any teaching that the keeping of the first day of the day of the week is as yet considered to be the receiving of the antichristian "mark of the beast." He pointed out to them that in their book store adjoining the building in which these meetings were taking place a certain volume published by them and written by one of their ministers categorically stated the contrary to what they were now asserting. The leaders sent for the book, discovered that Mr. Martin was correct, and immediately brought this to the attention of the General Conference officers, that this situation might be remedied and such publications be corrected. *This same procedure was repeated regarding the nature of Christ while in our flesh which the majority of the denomination has always held to be sinless, holy, and perfect despite the fact that certain of their writers have occasionally gotten into print with contrary views completely repugnant to the Church at large (Eternity op.cit.; emphasis supplied).*

This was the beginning of the lying because "the majority of the denomination" had over the years believed that Christ took the fallen nature of man in entering humanity.* This lying was compounded. When *Questions on Doctrine* was published a series of Appendices (A-C) made up solely of quotations from the Writings were included. Appendix B was on "Christ's Nature During the Incarnation." Section III of this appendix was titled - "Took Sinless Human Nature." In the new Annotated Edition, Knight comments:

Heading number III has been seen as problematic because it implies that Ellen G. White believed that Christ "took sinless human nature" when in fact she claimed the opposite. For example, in 1896 she wrote that Christ "took upon Him our sinful nature" (Review & Herald, Dec. 15, 1896, p. 789). Again in 1900 she penned that "He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin" (*Youth's Instructor*, Dec. 20, 1900). Those quotations, as might be expected, were left out of the compilations in *Questions on Doctrine* on pages 650 to 652. Thus *Questions on Doctrine* not only supplied a misleading heading, but also neglected to present evidence that would have contradicted that heading (p. 516).

This was a double falsification of fact, both verbally to the Evangelical conferees and now written into the Appendix. Knight prefers to define it as "less than straight forward and transparent," rather than calling it by its right name, lying (p. 517). As if this were not enough, the Adventist conferees "explained to

Mr. Martin that they had among their number certain members of their 'lunatic fringe' even as there are similar wild-eyed irresponsibles in every field of fundamental Christianity" (Barnhouse, op. cit.). These lunatics, the Evangelicals were told, as noted above, "have occasionally gotten into print with contrary views completely repugnant to the Church at large."

This, however, was not the end of the controversy within Adventism. Knight's annotation continues:

The controversy regarding *Questions on Doctrine's* Appendix B was reignited in 1970 when it was republished in full in volume 7-A of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Then in 1971 L. E. Froom, one of the principle (sic) authors of *Questions on Doctrine*, published *Movement of Destiny*, in which he once again implied that Ellen White taught that Christ took "sinless" human nature through his use of "Took Sinless Nature of Adam Before the Fall" as a subheading in his summary of her thought on the topic (see p. 497) [p. 524].

[Not only did Froom in *Movement of Destiny* seek to sustain what *Questions on Doctrine* had stated in regard to the nature Christ assumed in the incarnation but also in the same book he sought to continue the falsification of the historical record concerning the Church's teaching on the incarnation by referring to the historic position as an "erroneous minority position" (p. 428).]

Knight continues:

In apparent response, in February 1972 the General Conference's Biblical Research Institute published a 12-page insert in *Ministry* magazine that sought to put the record straight. The insert consisted of a "more helpful" (p. 2) version of Appendix B on Christ's nature during the incarnation. The new version eliminated the italics, reorganized the text of the appendix, and deleted some of the quotations. But most importantly, it supplied several new subtitles to make them more accurate and less controversial. Thus "Took Sinless Human Nature" was replaced as a subhead by "In Taking Human Nature Christ Did Not Participate in Its Sin or Propensity to Evil" (p. 5).

Questions on Doctrine (1957) was prepared under the direction of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It should be noted that the next major book providing an overview of Adventist doctrines published by the Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* (1988), did not follow the lead of *Questions on Doctrine* on the nature of Christ, but utilized Melvill's model (pp. 47-48) [p. 524].

This leaves us with unanswered questions; however, there is one major question. If, as Knight writes, *Questions on Doctrine* "has probably done more to create theological division in the Adventist church than any other document in its more than 150-year history" (p. 516); and that it "easily qualifies as the most divisive book in Seventh-day Adventist history" (p. xiii), why republish it, and republish it as a part of the Adventist Classic** Library series? In the previous issue of WWN, we did cite an answer given on the Adventist News Network, and previewed some of the factors we have documented in the above paragraphs. The question still remains: Is the ANN explanation the real answer?

*The following books give documentation as to the position held by the Church from its beginning till the 1940s:

The Word Was Made Flesh – Dr. Ralph Larson. This book documents one hundred years of Seventh-day Adventist Christology, 1852-1952.

Christ Manifest in the Flesh – Dr. J. R. Zurcher. This book traces one hundred and fifty years of Seventh-day Adventist Christology, 1844-1994.

**How can one possibly define *Questions on Doctrine* as "classic"?

(To Be Continued)

Personal Involvement

During the last half of the 1950s and into the beginning of the 1960s I was an evangelist as well as a pastor in the Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. During the first part of this period of time, Elder Arthur Kiesz, an excellent administrator who himself had been a pastor and evangelist, was president of the conference. He was followed by T. E. Unruh, who chaired the SDA-Evangelical Conferences (*The Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 37).

I had begun to notice in the *Ministry* magazine articles setting forth concepts which had a strange and different doctrinal emphasis than what I had been taught while at Union College, or during the Bible Studies, which my mother

and I had received from a retired credentialed Bible Worker, in becoming Seventh-day Adventists. (At Union I had taken Bible under Dr. I. F. Blue and Elder J. W. Roland, conservative Christian men of God, as well as working as a Reader in the department.) I became concerned and wrote to Elder H. L. Rudy, a vice president of the General Conference, who had been president of the Canadian Union when I served as pastor of the Toronto First Church. He responded and told me that a book would soon be released which would answer my questions. As soon as *Questions on Doctrine* was available I procured a copy. I found in the book concepts which differed from the Adventism that I had accepted, was taught, and had been preaching. I opposed the book and began speaking out against it.

Soon after receiving the book, I vacationed in Canada, and visited in Oshawa with Monte Myers, Sr., who had served as first elder and chairman of the Board of the First Church in Toronto when I was pastor. Also visiting with him that day was another minister, N. S. Mizher. I shared with them my convictions in regard to the book. They chided me and said that the only one who agreed with me was "old" Elder Andreasen. On arriving back home, I sought to obtain further information concerning Andreasen's position.

[In this period of time other things were taking place. In discussing the doctrine of the incarnation as taught in *Questions on Doctrine* with Jesse Dunn of Rockford, Indiana, I was told that the Holy Flesh men had taught a similar concept. This sparked my research into the teachings of that movement. Brother Dunn helped me, as he had been "State Agent" in the conference at that time, and knew personally the ministers involved. Also, there was being circulated to the Bible teachers of the Colleges and Academies a "Supporting Brief," which A. L. Hudson was submitting to the 1958 General Conference Session in regard to the book. I was given the copy which the Indiana Academy Bible teacher had received. In it was reference to the manuscript, *1888 Re-Examined*, which I had heard about when a pastor in Toronto, but had been unable to

obtain a copy. I wrote to Hudson, obtained his copy on loan, and began a deeper study than I had previously done into the 1888 Message and aftermath.]

While Elder Kiesz was president, I recall two worker's meetings, one at which Elder M. L. Andreasen was the key presenter, and the other at which Elder D. E. Rebok, president of the Theological Seminary, then at Washington D.C., and Miss Louise C. Kleuser, of the General Conference Ministerial Department, were the guest speakers. During the meeting, Ms. Kleuser told of the SDA-Evangelical Conference meetings. She spoke of one of the Evangelical conferees smoking a pipe during the sessions, but referred to him as a "very godly man."

At the first camp meeting after Unruh became president, Elder R. Allan Anderson was the principal speaker. He spoke at all of the afternoon worker's meetings. His presentation concerned the development of Adventist doctrine. He maintained that the period between 1844 and 1888 were formative years, but as a result of 1888, in the decade of the 1890s, the teachings of the Church were confirmed. To the laity he preached "the new theology" of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*. After each meeting, various laymen came up and challenged him. This disturbed him, and he talked to Unruh about it. Unruh concluded that I was behind this reaction to Anderson's presentations. At the conclusion of the next evening meeting, he called for all the workers to assemble on the platform and announced a meeting to follow in a short period of time in the chapel of the old Academy. I knew "the hour had come." I went to our cabin, prayed, and gathered my brief case of study material and proceeded to the chapel.

Unruh said, as he opened the meeting, that there would be free discussion. He wanted all questions that concerned what was being presented at the camp meeting to be brought up; Elder Anderson was there and would be able to answer them. Elder Clifford Bee asked the first question of a general nature, and was cut short by Unruh. I well knew for what he was driving, and so asked the second question. I called attention to the premise Anderson was using in

his presentations at the daily worker's meetings - that the years prior to 1888 were formative years. I asked how this could be reconciled with the statements in *Special Testimonies*, Series B, which stated that the foundation had been firm for the past 50 years. I stated that 50 years prior to 1903 was not 1888 (Series B, #2: pp. 51, 54, 58; #7: p. 37). Two other ministers joined me in pressing the point. The statement found in *A Word to the "Little Flock"* regarding Crosier's article (p. 12) was introduced, and discussion ensued about how much is to be included in the use of "&c" in the phrase, "cleansing of the Sanctuary, &c." Finally, Elder Anderson asked how I explained, Hebrews 9:11-12: - "Christ ... entered in ... having obtained eternal redemption for us." This verse took me by surprise, and I admitted that I had not given it study as to the emphasis he was inferring, that the atonement was completed on the cross. It was past 1 a.m., and at that point Unruh called the meeting to a close. Anderson protested that he was ready to go the rest of the night, if need be, to discuss the incarnation and other related topics. It was evident that what was desired was a discussion on the incarnation, for which I was not ready, and the point chosen caught Anderson and Unruh by surprise.

A year or so later, I met Anderson in the book store at Loma Linda, and he told me that Hebrews 9:11-12 were the verses that the Evangelical conferees threw at them, which caused them to capitulate. But that night in Indiana, if the minister sitting behind me had passed the Bible he was using (RSV) to me, I could have given an answer. It reads: "Christ..entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption." This translation can be sustained by Greek syntax. He kept quiet during the discussion, but showed it to me afterwards. (He later became a Union Conference president.)

All was quiet for another year. Another confrontation would come at the next camp meeting. Elder A. V. Olson was the special guest speaker. He, too, had the workers' meetings during the camp session. Brinsmeadism had become an issue by that time. During these sessions I kept quiet, knowing full well that if I said anything,

right or wrong, it would be used against me. Olson even denied what was plainly stated in *Education* (p.36), that the sanctuary was a symbol of God's desire for the human soul.

After the camp meeting, every minister is assigned to a work detail to quickly close down the camp, so as to return home that day. Unruh came and called me off my detail, an almost unheard of thing, stating that Elder Olson wished to talk with me. We went to the room in the basement of the girl's dormitory, which he used as an office during the session.

The first question was, What do you believe about the Incarnation? I asked them how they defined, "infinite." They hedged and neither wished to give me a definition. I told them that I was not trying to trap them but just wanted a simple answer. Then I quoted to them from *Christ's Object Lessons*:

It is fellowship with Christ, personal contact with a living Saviour that enables the mind and heart and soul to triumph over the lower nature. Tell the wanderer of an almighty hand that will hold them up, of an infinite humanity in Christ that pities them (p. 388).

This I told them was what I believed about the incarnation. A discussion followed on how much of the nature of humanity Jesus took upon Himself. Finally a question was raised between them as to whether Christ could take a common cold. Their discussion became so intense that for the moment it seemed I was out of the picture. I sat there and laughed, because it reminded me of what history had recorded of the Middle Ages when they argued over how many spirits could dance on the point of a needle.

This infuriated Unruh, and he said to Olson, "I want to tell you about this man. He has a peculiar personality. The laity believe what he tells them, but they won't believe me." Olson looked at his watch, and said he had to go so as not to miss his plane out of Indianapolis. We had prayer, and when we arose, Olson said to me, "I did not ask to have this talk with you," and walked out. Unruh argued with me all the way back to my work detail.

I was pastoring the Muncie Church at the time. The first elder of the Church was a member of

the Conference Committee. He kept telling me that at each session of the committee my name was being brought up for discussion as what to do with me. At the year's end, the Muncie Church selected their Nominating Committee by ballot, and the five names to receive the most votes constituted the committee. Certain individuals with whom Unruh - unknown to me - had been in contact did not make the committee. I was called into the office and told to dissolve the elected committee and appoint a new one, which included these two individuals. I told him that if he wanted this done he could do it himself. This, of course, constituted insubordination, and I was relieved of my responsibilities.

The first elder of the Muncie church gave me a job in his business, and had the church elect me as a local elder at a called business meeting. Finally, a pastor was appointed, and I introduced him to the church because Unruh wouldn't come and do it.

Without Unruh's knowledge, a call came to teach at Madison College as head of the Bible and History Department. This I accepted. The liaison minister between the General Conference and Madison College told me that all the time Madison remained in operation, Unruh kept up a barrage of correspondence to various levels of administration to have me fired. He was not successful. When Madison College closed, I received two calls, one to the Minnesota Conference, and the other to the local Kentucky-Tennessee Conference. I declined both, and asked to go to Andrews University to complete work on a graduate degree. This I did, with a promise to be connected with the Faculty of Religion of Southern Missionary College for their Madison campus nursing program. When, after the graduate work was completed at Andrews, the nursing program envisioned did not materialize, I took a leave of absence as a minister in good and regular standing and continued so till the Adventist Laymen's Foundation was chartered. But that is a story in itself.

A Postscript

At the time (circa 1904) of the "Alpha" apostasy, Ellen White wrote that if it had

succeeded certain things would have taken place: "The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be counted as error... Books of a new order would be written. ... Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of this new movement" (*Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 2, pp. 54, 55). But it did not succeed; however, she also wrote, "The omega will follow, and will be received..." (*ibid.* p. 50).

All of these items mentioned as to what would have been the fruitage of the "alpha" had it been successful, occurred in and following the publication of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*. Now it is being republished!

There is another factor that needs careful consideration. In the March issue of WWN, the question was raised - "Why republish the book?" (p. 2, col. 2). The answer as given in ANN was noted. The reaction to the 1980 Statement of Beliefs by Martin and the reply of the General Conference was documented. In this Annotated Edition, Knight gives evidence that the Adventist conferees lied to Martin and manipulated the Writings to justify the lie. Under ordinary circumstances this would turn the Evangelicals off (Evangelical reaction is not yet available to this editor), but it also appears that Knight believes that the current position of the Church on the Incarnation covers any negative reaction, so that Adventism will not be returned to the "sect" category from which Barnhouse and Martin supposedly delivered it.

There is, however, another problem. The Adventist conferees, sensing two seeming different positions on the Incarnation in the Writings, omitted the statements in their compilations which appeared to be contrary to the lies they were seeking to support. Knight cites a new approach to the doctrine of the Incarnation, which was the result of a "discovery" made by the White Estate that Ellen White had adopted the teachings of an Anglican clergyman, Henry Melvill, in regard to the Incarnation. Knight, in his annotations, writes at length on this "discovery" under the caption, "The key to understanding Ellen White's

seemingly contradictory statements" (pp. 522-524). This is not the first time he has done so. See Website: WWN, XXI (1988), #8 & 9. The Melvill position will need to be considered, as well as Ellen G. White's relationship to it. Since Melvill calls his position, "the orthodox position," will its adoption cover the lying manipulation of the Adventist conferees back in 1955-1956? Only time will tell; however, not only will the Evangelicals have a decision to make, but the individual Adventist will also have to ask himself a question or two: 1) Is Melvill's position Biblical? And 2) Did Ellen G. White select his position on the incarnation?

To Be Continued

The track of truth lies close beside the track of error, and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error (*Series B*, #2, p. 52).

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WEBSITES

<http://ourworld.cs.com/adventistaler1>

<http://www.adventistlaymen.com>

E-MAIL

Editor - grotheer@adventistlaymen.com
 Webmaster - webmaster@adventistlaymen.com
 Webmaster, JO - adventistaler1@cs.com

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Editor, Publications & Research

Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

Regional Contacts:

Australia - P. O. Box 5023, Wodonga Plaza, VIC 3690

Canada - P. O. Box 117, Thorne, ON POH 2JO

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800-4-LAYMEN (800-452-9636)
 FAX - (479) 292-3745; Regular Calls - (479) 292-3721