

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



Status, Authority, and Relationship of Three Books

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Editor's Preface

The three books which we discuss in this issue as to their status, relationship and authority are: 1) The 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine*; 2) The 2003 Annotated Edition of the same book; and 3) *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* The 1957 edition prefaces its answers with the 1931 Statement of Beliefs made official in 1946. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* is a discussion, statement by statement, of the 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted by the Church in general session at Dallas, Texas.

Because the connecting link centers in the doctrine of the Incarnation, we discuss first what the Bible says, then note various statements found in the Writings. Inasmuch as a letter written in 1895 is the "centerpiece" of those who hold to the assumption that Christ took upon Himself an immaculate human nature in becoming man, we note biographical data as well as the letter written to W. L. H. Baker and his wife.

What is most unusual in regard to the letter is that we give the caution advised, as if Baker had actually violated this caution in what he said or wrote without producing a single article which he may have written to verify that assumption. It is inconceivable that a man who was an evangelist and then a church administrator in Australia for seventeen years, who in 1917 was appointed Bible teacher at Avondale College, did not write some article for publication which related to the doctrine in all those years. After returning to the States in 1922 he continued in college Bible teaching. Yet no evidence has been produced as to what he taught or wrote, nor is there any record that his teachings were called into question as a Bible teacher. A caution is not a condemnation of erroneous teaching!

In the Annotated Edition, the self styled "orthodox doctrine" of Henry Melvill is promoted. This we will consider in next issue.

The Status, Authority and Relationship of Three Books

With the publication of the annotated edition of *Questions on Doctrine*, it, with the 1957 edition of the same book, are now interrelated with a third book, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe...* This third book, while printed by the Review & Herald Publishing Association, was published by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference. What is the official status of these books, and how are they related? Dr. George R. Knight cites three doctrinal areas which he terms "problematic" areas of concern in his preface to the Annotated edition. These are the doctrines of the Trinity, the atonement, and the human nature of Christ. It is this last doctrine which serves as the link connecting all three books.

The 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine* (*QonD*) taught (which can be summarized briefly) that Christ took the nature of Adam before the Fall. The Adventist conferees claimed that this had been the position of the Church from its beginnings, except for a few in the "lunatic fringe" who taught that Christ took the nature of man after the Fall. Knight, in his annotated edition, states that on this point the Adventist conferees purposefully misrepresented the facts to Barnhouse and Martin, in other words, lied. He admits that the Church's position had been that Christ took the fallen nature of Adam in assuming humanity. He, however, advocates a third position, which is termed "the orthodox doctrine" as set forth in the book published by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference. This statement of the doctrine could be summarized as Christ taking a little bit of both, so that He took neither the fallen nor unfallen nature of man.

What status was given to the 1957 edition of *QonD*? "The Editorial Committee" in the "Introduction" made clear that "no statement of Seventh-day Adventists belief can be considered official unless it is adopted by the General Conference in quadrennial session, when accredited delegates from the whole world field

are present;" but because "the answers" in the 1957 edition are only "an expansion [?] of the doctrinal positions contained" in the 1931 Statement of Beliefs (made official in 1946), this 1957 edition "can be viewed as truly representative of the faith and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (p. 9).

Who composed this "Editorial Committee"? A. V. Olson, a General Conference vice president and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, chaired the Committee. Other members included W. E. Read, M. Thurber, W. G. C. Murdoch, Richard Hammill, L. E. Froom and R. Allan Anderson. This committee was appointed by the officers of the General Conference. The Review & Herald Publishing Association was invited to "manufacture the book 'as compiled by a committee appointed by the General Conference,' accepting the manuscript in its completed form" (*Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p.44). Prior to this, another committee of 14 members chaired by R. R. Figuhr, president of the General Conference, prepared a document of the questions and answers for submission to 250 chosen Adventist leaders. The feedback was analyzed and evaluated by the 14-member committee and placed in the hands of the Editorial Committee for publication. Not only did the conferees lie to the Evangelicals, but the officers of the Church became party to it in the publication of the book. There was indeed apostasy in high places. The question remains - at what point in the publication process were the questions and answers, from which Martin quoted in his second article in *Eternity*, given to him? If we are now admitting to falsification as Knight is doing in the annotated edition, why not have the whole picture for a complete evaluation?

The book, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe...*, begins with a similar statement of status as did *QonD*. It reads:

The present volume, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, is based on these short summaries [1980 Statements of Belief]. They appear at the beginning of each chapter. In this book we present for our members, friends, and other interested person, in an expanded, readable, and practical manner, these doctrinal convictions and their significance for Adventist Christians in today's society. While this

volume is not an officially voted statement – only a General Conference in world session could provide that – it may be viewed as representative of “the truth ... in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21) that Seventh-day Adventists around the globe cherish and proclaim (p. iv).

The Annotated Edition is published by the Andrews University Press and edited by George R. Knight. It is given status by being one of the first two books to be published as a part of the Adventist Classic Library envisioned by the editor and by Ronald Knott of the Press. It is an exact republication of the 1957 edition with added notes. The editor perceives the original edition as having “stood at the very center of Adventist theological dialogue since the 1950s, setting the stage for ongoing theological tension” (p. xi). It is theological discussion taken out of the hands of administrators and placed at the heart of the Church’s theological teaching: Andrews University.

Relationship

As noted above, the link which connects these books is the doctrine of the Incarnation. We need to recapitulate certain facts. To obtain the favor of the Evangelicals, the Adventist conferees lied to Barnhouse and Martin in regard to the teaching of the Church on this doctrine during eight decades of its existence. This lie was administratively confirmed in the publication of the book, *QonD*. This Knight has noted in the Annotated Edition which he has edited. He also confronts another problem – the seeming contradiction in the Writings of Ellen G. White on this doctrine. To continue to be emancipated from the cult standing with the Evangelicals, and to explain what appears to be a contradiction in the Writings, Knight opts for what is termed “the orthodox doctrine” as was adopted by the writer of the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* (pp. 47, 57; footnote #13). In doing so, he cites research by Tim Poirier of the White Estate (Annotated Edition, p. 522, sec. 8). To work through this maze we must first start at “the only infallible rule of faith and practice,” the “Holy Scriptures” (1872 Statement of Beliefs, # III; emphasis supplied).

The Incarnation in the Bible

In citing Biblical references we shall note certain texts, ask key questions, and leave with you the final deductions.

Romans 8:3 – “condemned sin in the flesh” (κατεκρινεν την ‘αμαρτιαν εν τη σαρκι).

This reads literally – “condemned the sin in the flesh.” How could it be said that He condemned “*the* sin” in the flesh if He took the pre-Fall nature of Adam? Only the fallen nature of Adam had “the sin” in the flesh.

Philippians 2:7 – “But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant” (αλλ’ εαυτο νεκενωσεν μορφην δουλου λαβων).

This reads literally – “But Himself He emptied, a form of a slave taking.” A synonym of the word “form” (μορφη) is used in verse 8, (σχηματι) and can be translated either “fashion” or “figure.” Thayer in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* gives the fine distinction between the two words (p. 418). *Morphe* applies to that which is “intrinsic and essential,” while *schema* represents the “outward and accidental.” In other words, it was essential for the Messiah to take upon Himself the slave form of man. Paul in Hebrews uses stronger language – “It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (2:17).

The question is simply: Was the “image of God” in which Adam was created a slave form; or did Adam by transgression become a “slave”? The great mystery of godliness is that He who was the “express image” of Deity (Heb. 1:3) took the deformed image of man that as the Messiah – the Son of God and the Son of man – many sons might be returned to glory (Heb. 2:10).

Romans 1:1, 3-4 - Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ... concerning His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made 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, by the resurrection from the dead.

This is a stronger statement than used in Hebrews 2:16 – “took on Him the seed of Abraham.” Who would ever think of writing an essay on the impeccability of David? The life of

David stands as the very epitome of the fallen nature of man. Yet this risk assumed by Christ is declared to be a part of "the gospel of God." As Paul expands this concept, he writes – "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Lest we seek to blunt the word "likeness," we need to keep in mind that Paul uses the same word in Philippians 2:7, "in the likeness (ὁμοιωματι) of men becoming." Did Christ become a real man or was He only a phantom? If a real man, "the likeness of men becoming," then He took upon Himself our flesh, "the likeness of sinful flesh."

Galatians 4:4-5 – When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under (the) law, to redeem them that were under (the) law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

In both verses the article "the" has been supplied by the translators and is not in the Greek text. We have been born under law, and that law of heredity dictated that we received the fallen nature of "father" Adam. Christ likewise was born of a woman and came under the same law, unless Mary was immaculate, or there was Divine intervention that kept Him immune from that law in His prenatal development.

Then questions arise: How could he keep from sinning? Was He born mature? What about the years from birth to His "Bar Mitzvah"? It is impossible for us, conceived in sin, being wholly sinful, to perceive of One, a Divine Being, becoming a fetus in the womb of Mary, taking upon Himself our fallen nature, and yet not sinning. But the Scriptures are just as clear that He did not sin as that He took our fallen nature upon Himself:

I Peter 2:22 – He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

Hebrews 4: 16 – He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Christ could challenge His adversaries – "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46); and come to the close of His earthly pilgrimage and testify that "the prince of this world cometh and hath *nothing* in Me" (John 14:30, emphasis supplied). Truly as Paul wrote to Timothy after a

lifetime of service and contemplation – "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the *flesh*" (I Tim. 3:16; emphasis supplied) – and the only flesh known was the "sinful flesh" of Adam.

Because we cannot comprehend the mysteries of the Incarnation, we should not deny the greatness of the victory that the Logos achieved in becoming flesh (John 1:14). Heaven doesn't! John heard "a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Rev. 12:10). The male* Child had conquered the dragon! (12:5).

The Incarnation in the Writings

The doctrine of the Incarnation as stated in the Writings was, in the opinion of George R. Knight, "the most serious" problem faced by the Adventist conferees in their dialogue with the Evangelicals. He wrote:

In fact, the problem of Christ's human nature was the most serious one faced by the authors of *Questions on Doctrine*, given the presuppositions of Barnhouse and Martin and Adventism's generally accepted position on the topic in the early 1950s. Unfortunately, the Adventists of the day didn't see too many options in facing the theological challenge posed by the evangelicals regarding the human nature of Christ. It appeared to them that the only way to argue the question was to say that Christ was just like Adam before the Fall or to say that He was just like Adam after the Fall. The first option implied that the incarnate Christ was unlike other humans and thus couldn't be their example in the fullest meaning of the word, while the second option suggested that Christ had a sinful nature in every sense of the word and was thus, as the evangelical conferees saw it, a sinner.

The mid-century Adventists saw no other answer to the predicament – no third option on the human nature of Christ. As a result, the authors of *Questions on Doctrine* apparently were tempted to avoid some of Ellen White's strong statements in their compilation and to provide the misleading [prevaricated] heading on page 650. The result was peace with the evangelicals but trouble within the Adventist camp (Annotated Edition, p. 518).

In these two paragraphs, Knight has set forth the problems which this annotated edition is suppose to solve regarding the doctrine of the Incarnation: 1) the "strong statements" of Ellen White that Christ took the fallen nature of Adam;

and 2) the supposed equally as strong contrary statements, and 3) a proposed "third option." First let us note the "strong statements."

In 1877, Ellen White wrote:

It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man, that He might be made perfect through suffering, and Himself endure the strength of Satan's fierce temptations, that He might understand how to succour those who should be tempted (*Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol II, p. 39).

This concept that Christ took "upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man," in other words, the nature of Adam after the Fall, was the standard belief in Adventism until the 1940s. As the decade closed, *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* was revised, and the position on the Incarnation was modified (See Reading - "A Sinless Life," pp. 120-122).

In the December 20, 1900 issue of *The Youth's Instructor*, Ellen White would write:

Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. He took our sorrows, bearing our grief and shame. He endured all the temptations wherewith man is beset. He united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. (4BC:1147).

Then in 1901, she wrote:

In Christ were united the divine and the human - the Creator and the creature. The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, meet in Jesus - the Son of God, and the Son of man. (Ms. 141, 1901; 7BC:926).

To these statements, others might be added. Beyond question, the E. G. White position was that Christ in His humanity "took upon Himself" the fallen and defiled nature of Adam. All of these statements are in harmony with the Scriptures set forth in the previous section. The key is "took upon Himself." There is a distinct difference between "Himself" and what He "took upon Himself." This, Ellen White emphasized: "In His human nature ['degraded and defiled by sin'] He maintained the purity of His divine character" (*The Youth's Instructor*, June 2, 1898). When this is understood, the other

statements which appear as contrary to this position can be better interpreted.

The centerpiece of the "contrary" statements by Ellen White is a letter written to Wm. L. H. Baker. It is cited in 5BC:1128, pp. 1128-1129 as Letter 8, 1895. A careful reading indicates that Ellen White distinguished between Christ and what "He took upon Himself." Observe:

Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He was the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall and did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.

Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood. Truth lies close to the track of presumption. In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity.

A simple recognition that Jesus Christ was "the Word made flesh," and in so becoming combined "humanity. . . with divinity," would go a long way in understanding "the gospel of God" as defined by Paul in Romans 1:1, 3-4. In the above letter to W. L. H. Baker, Ellen White after defining the nature of man declared plainly, Christ "took upon Himself human nature" and was tempted, clearly separating the "human nature" taken, from the Divine Self taking that nature.

Following the emphasis given by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner to the nature Christ assumed in the Incarnation, as they presented the message of righteousness by faith, questions came to Ellen White "affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if He had, He would have fallen under similar temptations." To this she replied:

If He did not have man's nature, He could not be our example. If He was not partaker of our nature, He could not have been tempted as man has been. If it were not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be our helper. It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battles as man, in man's behalf (*SM*, bk. I, p. 408).

In another manuscript (W-106-1896), Ellen White wrote that "it was not make believe humanity that Christ took upon Himself. He took human nature and lived human nature. ... He was not only made flesh, but He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh." In an article appearing in the *Signs* (December 9, 1897) she clearly distinguished between the divine and the human, writing: "The human nature of Christ was like unto ours, and suffering was more keenly felt by Him; for His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin." He did no sin.

* There are three words in the Greek language that can be translated, "man" or designate a man: 1) Ανθρωπος - man in the generic sense. (Jesus designated Himself as "the Son of man"); 2) Ανηρ - a male person of full age and stature, as opposed to a child or female; a husband (Also used in Scripture to designate angels - Luke 24:4); and 3) Αρσεν - a male, of the male sex. It is this third word that is used in Revelation 12. See discussion in the manuscript - *In the Form of a Slave*, pp. 54-55.

(To be continued)

The W. L. H. Baker Letter (Letter 8, 1895)

This letter is reproduced in full as Ms. Release #1002 in Volume 13 (1993) of the Releases, with an explanation by K. H. Wood as to why the full release. It had previously been released in part as Ms. Release #414 in 1975. In both releases, a preface written by A. L. White is included. From this preface, and the obituary appearing in the *Review & Herald*, March 30, 1933, we note some biographical data.

Ellen White wrote this letter to both Elder and Mrs. Baker. She closes the letter with this sentence: "My dear Bro. and Sr. Baker, whom I love in the Lord, the Lord will guide you if you will only trust in Him." Two years after the letter was written, Elder Baker became president of

the NSW Conference with W. C. White as his vice-president. He served as president of several other Australian conferences and was appointed Bible Teacher at Avondale in 1914. When they returned to America in 1922, Elder Baker continued in college Bible teaching.

In 1882, Baker began work at the Pacific Press, and three years later married. During this time, Ellen White, at Healdsburg, was finishing the writing of Volume 4 of the *Spirit of Prophecy*, which required contact with the Pacific Press where Baker was employed. In 1887, Brother and Sister Baker were called to Australia to unite with the publishing work there. In 1891, Ellen White arrived in Australia and began her work in Melbourne where the publishing work was located. Again the paths of the Bakers and Ellen White would meet.

In 1897, Ellen White would refer to him as "a discreet, profitable worker in the field," and in 1900 she counselled a younger worker before her return to America to seek his advice defining him as a man being "true as steel to principle." But in 1895, he was discouraged and looked upon his work "as almost a failure." He had transferred from the publishing work to field evangelism and was laboring in Tasmania. Ellen White begins her letter:

In the night season I was conversing with you. I had a message for you and was presenting that message. You were cast down and feeling discouraged. I said to you, The Lord has bidden me to speak to Bro. and Sr. Baker. You are considering your work as almost a failure, but if one soul holds fast to truth, and endures unto the end, your work cannot be pronounced a failure. If one mother has been turned from her disloyalty to obedience, you may rejoice. The mother who follows on to know the Lord will teach her children to follow in her footsteps. The promise is to the fathers, mothers, and their children. These dear children received from Adam an inheritance of disobedience, of guilt and death. The Lord has given to the world Jesus Christ, and His work was to restore to the world the moral image of God in man, and to reshape the character.

She follows this by counsel as to his preaching and appeals to the listeners, even suggesting "improvement in [his] delivery." While a "positive" speaker, it was suggested he mingle with this positiveness, "persuasive entreaties." There follows other good counsel which can be found in the book, *Evangelism*. After the

homiletical advice is the admonition to be "careful, exceedingly careful how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ," and "to avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood." It is inconceivable that Baker did not write articles for the Australian publication, *Bible Echoes*. If before the letter was sent in 1895, we could know just what he was saying and teaching, which caused the counsel for him to "be careful;" but if after, we could know how he understood the counsel given. Keep in mind that he served as an administrator and college Bible teacher after 1895. Also note that while Ellen White urged caution, she did not condemn what he was saying.

There is one question in regard to the Incarnation that the testimony raises. After writing that "truth lies close to the track of presumption" ("an attitude or belief dictated by probability; assumption;" or "the ground, reason, or evidence lending probability to a belief" - *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*). Ellen White wrote:

In treating upon the humanity of Christ, you need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest your words be taken to mean more than they imply, and thus you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity. [Here again is the concept, "He took upon Himself our fallen nature."] His birth was a miracle of God (Luke 1:31-35 is then quoted).

These words are not addressed to any human being, except to the Son of the Infinite God. Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called that holy thing. It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such a one as ourselves: for it cannot be. The exact time when humanity blended with divinity, it is not necessary for us to know. We are to keep our feet on the rock, Christ Jesus, as God revealed in humanity.

I perceive that there is danger in approaching subjects which dwell on the humanity of the Son of the infinite God. He did humble Himself when He saw He was in fashion as

a man, that He might understand the force of all temptations wherewith man is beset.

In this letter, Baker is not condemned for anything he had said, but cautioned to be careful, "exceedingly careful," in discussing the Incarnation so as to clearly distinguish between "the Son of the Infinite God" and the nature of the humanity He assumed. Another aspect is introduced - "the exact time when humanity blended with divinity." This time factor, to my knowledge, has not been a part of the current controversy over the Incarnation.

In the over all picture of the Baker Letter, it must be kept in mind that in 1900, five years after writing the letter to Brother and Sister Baker, Ellen G. White would herself write:

Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. (4BC:1147).

(To be continued)

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