



“Watchman, what of the night?”



“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!” Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

► THIS ISSUE’S READING

**“THE TRUE BIBLICAL
DOCTRINE CONCERNING
THE INCARNATION OF
JESUS – REVISITED # 1”**

Editor’s Preface

In October 1972, the Adventist Laymen’s Foundation of Mississippi, Inc. released its first research manuscript – *An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. The manuscript was the culmination of intensive research and study made by Elder William H. Grotheer during the preceding fifteen years beginning in 1957. He was deeply concerned with the compromises made by the Adventist conferees with the Evangelicals during the SDA-Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956 and embodied in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* published in 1957.¹ Elder Grotheer particularly focused on the changes made in regard to the humanity that Christ assumed in the Incarnation. In the following testimonial, he explains:

“While we do not consider the SDA-Evangelical Conferences ... to be the leading of the Lord, the immediate fall-out caused study and research on the Incarnation by many, including this editor, such as had been done for years. A review of some of that study is in order. ...

“I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the fulfillment of the precious promise which reads:

‘When you rise in the morning, do you feel your helplessness, and your need of strength from God? and do you humbly, heartily make known your wants to your Heavenly Father? If so, angels mark your prayers, and if these prayers have not gone forth out of feigned lips, when you are in danger of unconsciously doing wrong, and exerting an influence which will lead others to do



wrong, your guardian angel will be by your side, prompting you to a better course, choosing your words for you, and influencing your actions.’ (3T, pgs. 363-364).²

“What applies to deeds and actions, applies equally to our thoughts and words, whether written or spoken. In the early morning hours, when much of the writing of the original manuscript was done, I was many times conscious of the presence of my unseen Guardian. ...

“In presenting the teachings of the Church as to the nature Christ assumed in becoming man, no attempt is being made to detract from the dignity of His pre-existence as One with the Father from all eternity, nor in any way to disassociate Him from the oneness with the Father during His earthly sojourn. At Bethlehem, the Word who was in the beginning with God ‘came to be’ (ἐγένετο) flesh (John 1: 1, 14). This same God who was manifest in the flesh was received up into glory, where at the throne of the Eternal, He continues to minister as the Son of man. (1 Timothy 3: 16; 2: 5; Hebrews 9: 24). ...

“This research was published ... because – ‘The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us’ (YI, October 13, 1898, pg. 371)³ – and since it is, we need to understand the historic position of the Church, which emphasized the tremendous victory which Christ achieved in our nature, so that we may by faith overcome as He overcame.”

It is to this end that we are presently ‘revisiting’ the essential scriptural truth of the humanity that Jesus assumed in the Incarnation beginning with this Issue of WWN.

“ The Incarnation In The Final Conflict And The Restitution Of All Things ”

The first intimation of the nature that Christ would assume in the incarnation was given in a declaration of war which began the conflict on earth between Himself and Satan. As the guilty pair who had precipitat-

ed this conflict stood before the One who was to be their Redeemer, they heard Him respond to the unprovoked attack of Lucifer by cursing the serpent and promising – “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3: 15). Gesenius translates this verse from the Hebrew as – “He shall crush thee as to the head, and thou shalt bruise Him as to the heel, by thy bite.” It was to be a bruising conflict, but in the end, the head of the serpent would be crushed – and by Whom? The seed of the woman.

We might ask – was this spoken to the woman before she fell, or as she stood in her fallen state? The answer is obvious – the seed of the fallen woman would bruise the serpent’s head. If she had not yielded to the serpent’s suggestion and rejected the word of God, there would have been no need for this promise or declaration of war. The whole question and issue revolves around humanity in a fallen state. One who would come through the process of human birth would destroy the power, dominion, and kingdom of Satan. Thus was revealed the mystery of the ages. God was to be manifest in the flesh, and He accepted the only flesh available to Him in which to be manifest – the fallen!

The key actors when this first intimation of the nature of the incarnation was given in the Garden of Eden appear again in Revelation, Chapter 12. We see the woman, the seed, and the serpent. Again there is war. The serpent stands before the woman “to devour her child as soon as it was born.” (v. 4). She brought forth a child, a man. This word for “man” is not *anthropos*, a man in the generic sense, nor *aner*, a husband, but *arsen*, the male sex. Michael did not come into the world bereft of the forces and powers which drive and surge through mankind. To restore the kingdom of God, to crush the serpent’s head, Jesus “condemned sin in the

flesh," at the very fountainhead of its strength. (Romans 8: 3).

The prophecy of Daniel, Chapter 7 reveals to us that in the final struggle of the conflict of the ages, the nature of the incarnation would be projected to the forefront of the battle. In the vision given to Daniel, he is brought down through the dominions of earth represented by the lion, bear, leopard, past the non-descript beast with its little horn to the time when "the judgment was set, and the books were opened." (v. 10). This Daniel was later shown to be when the sanctuary would be cleansed at the end of the 2300 prophetic days or 1844. (Ibid. 8: 14). But as his vision in Daniel 7 continued, he "beheld then [after 1844] because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake." (v. 11). We, too often, have emphasized the words of the "little horn" during its medieval reign of 1260 years as the "great" words. (See v. 25). But the word "great" is supplied in the KJV and is not in the text. The great "words" came after 1844!

The first great word of "the little horn," after 1844 was in 1854, when it promulgated the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This Dogma stated:

"We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin." ⁴

Cardinal Gibbons in his book, The Faith of Our Fathers commented on this dogma as follows:

"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." (pg. 171, 91st Edition). ⁵

The setting of the Judgment in the sanctuary above was paralleled with an announce-

ment on earth that that hour had arrived. (Revelation 14: 6-7). God raised up a movement on earth to give the Three Angels' Messages. To this movement, He restored the prophetic gift to guide in the final conflict. The first vision of the great controversy was given to Ellen G. White in 1848. This was repeated ten years later with instruction that it was to be written out. (LS, pg. 162). ⁶ The first book to appear in obedience to this instruction was Spiritual Gifts, Volume 1. Chapter 3 was captioned "The Plan of Salvation." In this chapter, Jesus' conversation with the unfallen angels is noted as well as Satan's boast to his cohorts. Note carefully both and the indicated common point of reference. Ellen White wrote:

"Jesus also told them (his angels) that they should have a part to act, to be with him, and at different times strengthen him. That he should take man's fallen nature, and his strength would not be even equal with theirs." (pg. 25; emphasis added).

"Satan again rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man's fall, pull down the Son of God from his exalted position. He told his angels that when Jesus should take fallen man's nature, he could overpower him, and hinder the accomplishment of the plan of salvation." (pg. 27). ⁷

Thus at the very beginning of the final conflict between truth and error, the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition, there was projected into the forefront of that conflict, the doctrine of the incarnation – the nature Christ assumed in His humanity. Now we must direct our attention to the struggle within God's final movement as the enemy has sought to introduce a false perception of the nature Christ assumed in the incarnation.

The Conflict Within The Seventh-day Adventist Movement, From 1888 to 1900

The doctrine of the incarnation received special emphasis by both Alonzo T. Jones

and Ellet J. Waggoner as part of the presentation of the message of Righteousness by Faith at the 1888 General Conference session and the sessions following. Those whom God called to bring the Message of Righteousness by Faith to His Church in 1888, taught the Incarnation in harmony with the biblical viewpoint as opposed to the religion of fable and tradition. Dr. Leroy Froom in his book, Movement of Destiny (pg. 189),⁸ asserts that Elder E. J. Waggoner's studies at Minneapolis in 1888 were recorded by shorthand, and published in 1890 as Christ and His Righteousness. Waggoner, in the book, unequivocally stated the biblical position on the Incarnation in contrast to the Papal pronouncement. He wrote:

"A little thought will be sufficient to show anybody that if Christ took upon Himself the likeness of man, in order that He might redeem man, it must have been sinful man that He was made like, for it was sinful man that He came to redeem. ... Moreover, the fact that Christ took upon Himself the flesh not of a sinless being, but of sinful man, that is, that the flesh which He assumed had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject, is shown by the statement that He 'was made of the seed of David, *according to the flesh.*' David had all the passions of human nature. He says of himself, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' Ps. 51: 5." (pg. 26-27, *emph. his.*)⁹

The 1901 General Conference session was not only the session when a major overhaul of the church structure was attempted, but also the session at which the "holy flesh" teaching was confronted, and the messenger of the Lord put a period to the Movement in Indiana. Penetrating through the issues generated by this aberrant movement to its heart and core, one doctrine emerges – the doctrine of the Incarnation. This movement was the first attempt by the enemy to alter the trust committed to the Advent Move-

ment and open the way for the Church to be moved toward Rome.

On the evening of April 16, 1901, Elder Waggoner was scheduled to preach. He chose as his text, a key text of the leaders of the Holy Flesh Movement - Hebrews 10:4-10 - "A body hast thou prepared me." After reading the Scripture, he indicated a question had been given him to answer. It read – "Was that holy thing which was born of the virgin Mary born in sinful flesh, and did that flesh have the same evil tendencies to contend with that ours does?" Waggoner told the delegates that in the very question itself was the idea of the Immaculate Conception. Then he stated:

"We need to settle, every one of us, whether we are out of the Church of Rome or not. There are a great many that have got the marks yet ... Do you not see that the idea that the flesh of Jesus was not like ours (because we know ours is sinful) necessarily involves the idea of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary? Mind you, in him was no sin, but the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, ... is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh." (1901 GC Bulletin, pgs. 403-404).

That there would be no question as to what he was talking about, he plainly stated – "the idea of sinless flesh [in] mankind is the deification of the devil." Then he continued:

"The flesh will be opposed to the Spirit of God so long as we have it, but when the time comes that mortality is swallowed up of life, then the conflict will cease. Then we shall no longer have to fight against the flesh, but that sinless life which we laid hold of by faith and which was manifest in our sinful bodies, will then by simple faith be continued throughout all eternity in a sinless body. That is to say, when God has given this witness to the world of his power to save to the uttermost, to save sinful beings, and to live a perfect life in sinful flesh, then he will re-

move the disabilities and give us better circumstances in which to live.” (pgs. 405-406).

Dr. Waggoner concluded his sermon by warning – “We must not be presumptuous. We can never get so much of the life of God that we can dispense with it, and live by ourselves alone. Now and in all eternity we do live only by the faith of the Son of God.” (pg. 408).¹⁰

In 1895, Elder A. T. Jones made the doctrine of the Incarnation very clear in total opposition to the consequence envisioned in the Catholic Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. He stated:

“One man is the source and head of all our human nature. And the genealogy of Christ, as one of us, runs to Adam ... All coming from one man according to the flesh, are all of one. Thus on the human side, Christ’s nature is precisely our nature.” (1895 GC Bulletin, pg. 231).

In commenting on John 1: 14, Jones asked a question – “Now what kind of flesh is it?” Then asking another, he amplifies the answer:

“What kind of flesh alone is it that this world knows? Just such flesh as you and I have. This world does not know any other flesh of man, and has not known any other since the necessity of Christ’s coming was created. Therefore, as this world knows only such flesh as we have, as it is now, it is certainly true that when ‘the Word was made flesh,’ he was made just such flesh as ours is. It cannot be otherwise.” (Ibid., pg. 232).¹¹

In 1897, Jones became editor-in-chief of the Review. Two years later, the Holy Flesh Movement began in Indiana. A campmeeting in 1900 held in Muncie, Indiana, was attended by S. N. Haskell. On his return to Battle Creek, he wrote two letters to Ellen G. White the same day, September 25, and both in regard to what he saw and heard in Indiana. In the second letter, Haskell wrote:

“Their point of theology in this particular respect (the Incarnation) seems to be this:

They believe that Christ took Adam’s nature before he fell; ... ”

Given Haskell’s agitation over the matter, it is inconceivable that he rested the matter in just two letters to Ellen G. White, for in less than two months, Jones began a series of editorials captioned “The Third Angel’s Message” and subheaded, “The Faith of Jesus.” In the Review and Herald, November 13, 1900, Jones announced, “Next week, we shall begin a study of the faith of Jesus as it is in Jesus himself, a study of God manifest in the flesh, as in Jesus himself.” In the last article of the series, December 25, Jones wrote:

“We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. Therefore, as man is since he became subject to death, this is what we see Jesus, in His place as man. Therefore, just as certainly as we see Jesus lower than the angels unto the suffering of death, so certainly it is by this demonstrated that as man, Jesus took His nature of man as he is since death entered; and not at all the nature of man as he was before he became subject to death.” (pg. 824).¹²

The “Holy Flesh” Response

To the position of A. T. Jones, R. S. Donnell, president of the Indiana Conference and leader of the Holy Flesh Movement, took radical exception. He, at the time, was writing a series of articles in the Indiana Reporter. It was like a debate between himself and Jones. While, Jones did not name him, Donnell did note Jones’ last editorial by name. The series of articles by Donnell asked the question – “Did Christ Come in Sinful Flesh?” He later published these in 1907 in tract form with the title, What I Taught in Indiana. Noting the title he had given the articles originally, he commented in a preface:

“Why I was charged with teaching ‘Holy Flesh’ I know not, unless it was that in my article[s], as well as in the pulpit, I took the

negative side of the question.” (pg. 1).

Following his resignation from the conference presidency in 1901, the incoming president wrote to Donnell and asked him a series of questions involving his teachings. On the subject of the nature Christ assumed in the incarnation, Donnell responded:

“Christ’s nature was a divine human nature, a nature which prior to the new birth, has not been possessed by a single son or daughter of Adam since the fall.” (Ibid., pg. 20).¹³

The nature of Adam before the fall is here equated to the nature received in the “new birth.” Christ took that nature; He came born, “born-again.” This position on the Incarnation, held by the men involved in the Holy Flesh Movement, has been and is being taught and promoted again as an acceptable “alternate view” in the current Christological controversy within the Adventist community.

From 1900 to 1950

The position set forth by A. T. Jones on the Incarnation in his messages during the 1890s and as Editor of the Review was reflected in the Sabbath School lessons from 1902 through 1914. Here is an example taken from the First Quarter’s Lessons in 1913:

“By assuming sinful flesh, and voluntarily making Himself dependent upon His Father to keep Him from sin while He was in the world, Jesus not only set the example for all Christians, but also made it possible for Him to minister to sinful flesh the gift of His own Spirit and power for obedience to the will of God.” (pg. 15).

Almost a half century passed before a frontal attack was again made on the Church’s teaching in regard to the Incarnation. The second time, it was the altering of the book – Bible Readings for the Home Circle in 1949. The change appears subtle and stealthy. The chapter “A Sinless Life” in the earlier 1915 edition of Bible Readings read:

“In Christ (God) demonstrated that it is possible, by His grace and power, to resist temptation, overcome sin, and live a sinless life in sinful flesh.”

The 1949 revised edition read:

“In Christ (God) demonstrated that it is possible, by His grace and power, to resist temptation, overcome sin, and live a sinless life in the flesh.”

One word only omitted, and the changed concept moved the Church toward Rome, and away from the sacred trust committed to it in its inception.

From 1950 and On

We come now to a very key time in the “great controversy” over the concept of the Incarnation – 1950. The confusion and conflict within Adventism today over the doctrine of the Incarnation which blunts their witness in the warfare against the great words of “the little horn” is the result of the compromises during the SDA-Evangelical Conferences in 1955-1956. Whether we place the “immaculate conception” in reference to Mary, or one generation later in relationship to Jesus, the end result is the same as to the nature Christ assumed in the Incarnation. The production of the SDA-Evangelical Conferences – the book Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine – teaches that Christ took fallen human nature “vicariously” even as he bore our sins, and not something “innately” His. (pgs. 59-60). The book emphatically states: “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.” (pg. 383; *emph. added*).¹ The choice of the word, “exempt” was not an accident, but the very word used by Cardinal Gibbons in defining the immaculate conception – “She (Mary) alone was exempt from the original taint.” (See again The Faith of Our Fathers, pg. 171).⁵

The position on the Incarnation taken in Questions on Doctrine has never been repudiated. In 1983 the book was officially reaffirmed and in 2003 it was reprinted by the Andrews University Press as part of their "Adventist Classic Library" series.

» *To be Continued.*

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine* (Washington D.D.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 59-60, 383.

2. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 363-364.

3. White, *The Youth's Instructor Articles, 1852-1914* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), 371, 492.

4. Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (Papal Encyclicals Online), <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm>

5. James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy Compant, Publishers - Ninety-first Edition, 1917), 171.
<https://catholicshield.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/faithofourfather00gibb.pdf>

6. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 162.

7. White, *Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Review and Herald Office - Facsimile Reproduction, 1945), 25, 27.

8. LeRoy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), 189.

9. E.J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Clarksville, AR: Pathway Publishers, 1978), 26-27.
https://www.whitehorsemedia.com/docs/christ_and_his_righteousness.pdf

10. *1901 General Conference Daily Bulletins* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn Books - Sermon, E.J. Waggoner, April 16, 1901), 403-406, 408.

11. *The General Conference Bulletin* (Adventist Digital Library: February 18, 1895 - Sermon, A.T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message"), 231-232.

12. A.T. Jones, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* ("The Third Angel's Message. The Faith of Jesus: What is it?" - November 13, 1900 / December 25, 1900), 728, par. 13 / 824, pars. 4-5.

13. (Note: For a more detailed exposition on this topic, see A.L.F.'s Manuscript booklet "The Holy Flesh Movement"). <https://alfiowa.com/store/>

*All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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