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# WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night:  
if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

## FUNDAMENTAL ADVENTISM

During the past decade, the church has been in a state of agitation. In 1957, the book, - Questions on Doctrine - was released to the church which altered basic doctrinal concepts in the areas of the incarnation and the atonement. These two doctrines will be discussed in future thought papers.

In this same decade, Robert Brinsmead made his debut in the United States. Questions were raised concerning the meaning of the final atonement, and an emphasis was placed on the doctrine of perfection.

Those who were deeply involved in the events that led to the publication of the book, Questions on Doctrine, and those who have embraced what is now termed, Brinsmeadism, - each from their own viewpoints - have a difficult time with objectivity because of their emotional involvement. Much of the official church reaction has been merely defensive in nature. There are however, basic concepts involved in these "happenings" of the past decade that cannot be side-tracked, or ignored. Let us pursue the concept of perfection briefly, yet pointedly in this present paper.

Forgetting for the present, if possible, the issues and agitation of this past decade, let us go back and consider what there is in fundamental Adventism that calls for a study of the doctrine of perfection. I can only testify to what I was taught when the Truth first came to me, believing that what was presented bore the credentials of the genuine Advent hope that was possessed by the founders of this Movement.



The Advent message was brought to our home in 1932. A retired Bible worker studied with my mother and me faithfully, and carefully for twenty-two weeks. We were taught that Jesus was coming soon - very soon! At His coming, a group of people were to be alive on the earth who would not taste death. During a period prior to this event, beginning in 1844, Jesus as our High Priest would be mediating in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. When His work as High Priest was completed, probation would close, and the irrevocable sentence would be pronounced that "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. . . and he that is holy, let him be holy still."<sup>1</sup> Then a short space of time would elapse before His appearing.

We were also taught the purpose and objective of the Spirit of Prophecy. Though at that time, because of the limitations imposed by the Great Depression, we were unable to buy any of the Spirit of Prophecy books, we did borrow some of them and read their messages. In Early Writings, and Great Controversy, we found specific statements which amplified the state of spiritual development which those who are alive on the earth when probation's hour closes must possess, if they are to endure through the time of Jacob's Trouble.

In Early Writings, we read:

I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary, through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God, and are protected in the time of trouble, *must reflect the image of Jesus fully.*<sup>2</sup>

In The Great Controversy, we read:

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a Mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God *and their own diligent effort*, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of the penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth.<sup>3</sup>



This basic concept, that a unique experience is essential for those who will stand in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor, was a part of the instruction that I received at Union College in preparation for the ministry. And during an almost quarter of a century in the ministry, I kept before the people of God the fact that probation's hour will close; and that when that hour does occur, those who are numbered among the victors of earth will cease to commit sin. I also warned that we could not expect to be in the habit of sinning one hour before the close of probation, and expect to stop sinning the hour that probation closed!

In recent years, I have been collecting the books of our pioneers, and I find that this teaching about our relationship to the end was a part of their message. Note what Elder James White stated:

The mass of the people think that if a person is prepared to die, he is prepared for the coming of the Lord. But they do not consider the difference between dying, and standing alive to meet the Lord at His appearing. It is one thing to die in Christ, to yield up our spirits to Him while He is pleading for us before His Father's throne, and quite a different thing to stand in the time of trouble, after Jesus has ceased to plead in man's behalf; after His priesthood is closed, and He is preparing to come to redeem His own, and take vengeance on His foes. They who now realize these things will bless heaven that means has been devised in the mercy of God for the perfecting of the saints, and that we are not left without direct help from on high to carry on such a work as lies before us. <sup>4</sup>

Now the question is simply - Is this still fundamental Adventist teaching today? If it is not, then it ought to be repudiated openly and emphatically. If it is, then there is not another item that should be placed first on any agenda, or any program that should take precedence over the study of this doctrine, and the way that it can be realized in a practical experience in the life of every member of the church. If we are as near the end - the close of probation - as the events of our times indicate, then it is time not only to proclaim this final aspect of the gospel itself, but how to obtain the power



of that gospel for complete victory over sin, once and for all! In other words, "the greatest and most important work in which we can engage is the preparation of a people to stand in the day of God." 5

In considering the impact of this doctrine, there are certain questions that need to be answered or reconciled. One question involves the uniqueness of this experience. Is this experience that is necessary to stand in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor, reserved alone for the generation that will experience the close of probation, or has this experience ever been possible for anyone in all time? An answer is found in this statement:

Enoch and Elijah are the correct representatives of what the race might be through faith in Jesus Christ if they chose to be. Satan was greatly disturbed because these noble, holy men stood untainted amid the moral pollution surrounding them, perfected righteous characters, and were accounted worthy for translation to Heaven. As they had stood forth in moral power in noble uprightness, overcoming Satan's temptations, he could not bring them under the dominion of death. 6

While some few in every generation have borne witness to the power of God in overcoming Satan, only two, according to available records, reached that state in their spiritual growth, where Satan could not bring them under the dominion of death. Of these two, Elijah stands as a type of "those who will be living upon earth at Christ's second coming, and who will be 'changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.'" 7 The fact remains, that the experience was ever possible, but few, very few indeed, out of the countless myriads of earth ever attained the goal. This points up the extreme difficulty, and the severe conflict necessary to obtain the objective. This is why no other problem facing the church even slightly approaches the magnitude of this problem. For if we do not solve this problem - NOW, we will be eternally lost!

It is incumbent upon the leadership of this church to present plainly the goal to be reached, and HOW it is to be achieved. The significance of the

experience stated in this sentence - "Through the grace of God and their own dilligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil"<sup>3</sup> - must be spelled out so clearly that every willing heart may understand. If this is not done, would not the words spoken anciently, but paraphrased with a modern accent, apply? If the ministry hold their peace at this time, then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the church from another source.

A second question needs to be considered also - the concept of holy flesh. This will be discussed in the next thought paper.

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<sup>1</sup>Revelation 22:11

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 71

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 425

<sup>4</sup>James White, Life Sketches, (1888 edition) p. 431

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 26, 1903

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, "Redemption - No 2", Review & Herald, March 3, 1874

<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 421

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Elder William H. Grotheer

P. O. Box 237

Florence, Miss., 39073

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