

JAN '69

"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 - 11

On the front flyleaf of a book in my library appears a notation in my mother's handwriting - "Sister Nora Grotheer & Children from Sister Bertha Jorgensen." Sister Jorgensen, a retired Bible Instructor, was the one who brought the truth to our home. The book is a 1915 edition of Bible Readings for the Home Circle. She gave this book to us from her personal library as a gift to remember her.

One chapter of this book is entitled, "A Sinless Life".¹ The fifth question of the study reads - "In His humanity, of what nature did Christ partake?" Hebrews 2:14 is quoted in answer with the fact emphasized that Christ, "took part of the same" flesh and blood as the children of men. The next question, its answer, and note of explanation are precisely stated:

6. How fully did Christ share our common humanity?

"Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Verse 17.

Note. - 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 man needs and must have to be saved. The idea that Christ was born of an immaculate or sinless mother, inherited no tendencies to sin, and for this reason did not sin, removes Him from the realm of the fallen world, and from the very place where help is needed. On the human side, Christ inherited just what every child of Adam inherits, - a sinful nature. On the divine side, from His very conception He was begotten and born of the Spirit. And all of this was done to place man on vantage-ground, and to demonstrate that *in the same way*

every one who is "born of the Spirit" may gain like victories over sin in his own sinful flesh. Thus each one is to overcome *as Christ overcame*. Rev. 3:21. Without this birth there can be no victory over temptation, and no salvation from sin. John 3:3-7

Was this fundamental Adventist teaching in 1915? Was it the teaching of the church from its first inception? Is it still fundamental Adventism today, or has there been a deviation?

In one of the earliest Spirit of Prophecy books, the servant of the Lord wrote on the nature of Christ's humanity in these words:

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 succor those who should be tempted. ²

This statement is but a verbal formulation of the "light" that "was given" after the passing of time in 1844 to guide the infant Movement in their understanding of "the Scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood."³ This teaching on the human nature that Christ assumed was the fundamental doctrine of the Advent Movement from its inception till about 1952. The *only exception* to this basic concept during this period of time was the teaching of the Holy Flesh Movement in Indiana at the turn of the century. They taught -

that Christ took Adam's nature before he fell; so He took humanity as it was in the garden of Eden, and thus humanity was holy, and this was the humanity which Christ had.⁴

The teaching of the Holy Flesh movement on the human nature of Christ didn't appear again in Adventist theology until 1956. In that year there appeared in the Ministry, an article entitled, "Human, Not Carnal". The author, also editor of the magazine, wrote:

When God became man He partook of the same moral nature that Adam possessed before the fall. Adam was created holy, and so was Christ, for He became the second Adam.⁵

Then a year later in the same publication, the same author states that "when

the incarnate God broke into human history and became one with the race, it is our understanding that He possessed the sinlessness of the nature with which Adam was created in Eden."⁶ That which the servant of the Lord stated concerning the teachings of the Holy Flesh movement would be equally applicable to this revival of the same concepts. Of the Holy Flesh doctrines she wrote, "I was shown that through this experience and the doctrines taught, the enemy has been working to lead souls astray."⁷

Also in the year 1957, the book - Questions on Doctrine - was published. While the statement that Christ took the nature that Adam had before his fall does not appear in the book, it is nevertheless stated that Christ was "exempt" from the inheritance common to the other children of Adam.⁸ [It must be kept in mind that the book published in 1957 was itself a revision of the answers given to Barnhouse and Martin in response to the questions they asked. This information from a reliable source in Washington D C, accounts for what appears to be a discrepancy between what Barnhouse and Martin declare was stated to them, and what finally appeared in the published book of answers.] The understanding given to the men who made the inquiry concerning Adventist teachings was sufficiently clear in regard to the "new look" on the incarnation that Martin was persuaded to write:

We have already quoted at length from current official Seventh-day Adventist sources which deny the sinful-nature theory with which critics have relentlessly charged them. Would it not be fairer to consider their publication, *Questions on Doctrine*, released in 1957 and endorsed by the denominational leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, than to cite from much older publications that have since been outdated or revised in these respects? ⁹

When has the Spirit of Prophecy been outdated? Who are the men that can presume to revise the inspired commentary? Is it not time for the leadership of the church to arise and repudiate these brazen attempts of the past decade to revise the fundamental teachings of the church!

In 1962, a student at Andrews University presented a paper to the Faculty of Church History on "The Humanity of Christ". He summarized his findings as follows:

The evidence presented in this study indicates that the Seventh-day Adventist Church: (1) has always upheld the Deity of Christ, has believed and steadfastly affirmed that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh - fully God and fully man; (2) has always been in close agreement in regard to the sinlessness of Christ, has consistently taught that Christ was in every sense sinless.

Regarding the specific question of Christ's humanity, this study has revealed that:

(1) from its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taught that when God partook of humanity He took, not the perfect, sinless nature of man before the Fall, but the fallen, sinful, offending, weakened, degenerated nature of man as it existed when He came to earth to help man.

(a) that this was interpreted to mean that the inclinations and tendencies to sin that are in fallen man's flesh were in His flesh, but that by complete dependence upon His Father His mind held its integrity and never by a shadow of a thought responded to the weaknesses or sinful cravings of the flesh.

(b) that this view of Christ's human nature in no way denied or contradicted the Church's stand on the complete Deity and absolute sinlessness of Jesus Christ.

(c) that as late as 1946 this was the accepted teaching of the Church as presented in denominationally published lesson quarterlies, books, and periodicals.

(2) that during the fifteen-year period between 1940 and 1955 the words "sinful" and "fallen" with reference to Christ's human nature were largely or completely eliminated from denominationally published materials.

(3) that since 1952, phrases such as "sinless human nature", "nature of Adam before the fall", and "human nature undefiled", have taken the place of the former terminology.

(a) that these phrases are interpreted to mean that the human nature of Christ was "sinful, fallen, or degenerated" *only* in the sense of weakness and frailty of the physical organism.

(b) that these weaknesses and frailties of the physical organism were not innately and intrinsically a part of Christ's human body but were only borne *vicariously* just as man's sins were borne vicariously.

Conclusion

The findings of this study warrant the conclusion that Seventh-day Adventist teachings regarding the human nature of Christ *have* changed and that these changes involve concepts and not merely semantics.¹⁰

Is it not time that we return to the fundamental teachings of the Advent Movement in regard to the human nature of our Lord so that -

Just as God in Christ, 4,000 years this side of Creation, lived a perfect, spotless life in sinful flesh, so through faith in Him, He will cleanse us from all our unrighteousness, impart to us His own righteousness, take up His abode in our hearts, and live the same kind of a life in our sinful flesh six thousand years this side of Creation. Then we can truly say, "as He is (in character) so are we in this world."¹¹

¹Bible Readings for the Home Circle (1915 edition) pp. 115-116

²Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, Vol. 2, p. 39

³Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B., No. 2, p. 57

⁴S. N. Haskell, Letter to Ellen G. White dated September 25, 1900

⁵R. Allan Anderson, "Human, Not Carnal", The Ministry, September, 1956, pp. 13-14

⁶R. Allan Anderson, "God With Us", The Ministry, April, 1957, p. 33

⁷Ellen G. White, Ms. 39, 1907

⁸Questions on Doctrine, p. 383

⁹Walter R Martin, The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism, pp. 87-88

¹⁰Robert L. Hancock, The Humanity of Christ, A Paper presented to the faculty of the Department of Church History, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, July, 1962, pp. 26-28

¹¹S. G. Huntington, "The Son of Man", p. 16 (Mission Press, LaFayette[Ind])
A tract written by one of the few ministers of the Indiana Conference who opposed the Holy Flesh Movement.

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Jan. 69 (II-1)