



"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

POSTSCRIPT ON PERFECTION

It was my purpose following the discussion on the incarnation in the three previous thought papers to turn to some other vital areas of thought. But a recent private publication¹ has re-focused attention on the subject of perfection. The book has raised some very serious questions which need to be carefully studied. On the whole it is but a reiteration of certain premises postulated by Hope Brinsmead-Taylor and popularized by her brother, Robert Brinsmead. One area, the subject of original sin, which until recently Brinsmead has not emphasized, was more fully developed and documented. After reading the book, one is left wondering, who is collaborating with who?

It is also a sad commentary on the thinking of some who maintain that if one is concerned about trends which are developing in the church, then there is only one thing to do - join forces with Brinsmead. Because one is concerned about certain developments, which are leading inevitably to the omega and false revival in the midst of Israel, does not mean that he must accept certain theoretical religious concepts which are not a part of the sure foundation upon which the Advent Movement rests.

On the way to the heavenly Canaan, we need the same conviction that was evidenced in the message sent by Moses to the king of Edom. It stated: "WE WILL GO BY THE KING'S HIGHWAY, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders."²

The subject of perfection is vitally connected with fundamental Advent-

ism.³ The study of the heavenly sanctuary and the work performed there by our High Priest *is* of vital concern to the last generation of men. There *is* no question but that the work of cleansing the sanctuary has a "decided relation to God's people upon the earth."⁴ However, what is that decided relationship? Is it the eradication from our vile body of the potential to sin, so that in reality all that is left is the shell of physical deformity to be changed at the last trump? If this is what is understood to be the decided relationship, then mark it plainly - this is the essence of "holy flesh", no matter what language it may be garbed in!

In the testimony which Sister White gave concerning the Holy Flesh Movement in the Indiana Conference, she noted plainly two concepts of error - "perfection *in* the flesh", and "perfection *of* the flesh."⁵ But she did state just as plainly -

*We may have Christian perfection of the soul. . . . When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation.*⁵

Also there is no question but that God is waiting to be vindicated in a group of people in this last generation before the curtains can be drawn on the drama of sin. But how is this vindication to take place? We read: "The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the *perfection of the character* of His people."⁶ Now character, which is developed, and nature which is hereditary, are not the same things! "The Lord now demands that every son and daughter of Adam, through faith in Christ, serve Him in the human nature which we now have."⁷ While the redemption provided by Christ Jesus was a whole redemption - even as sanctification - involving body, soul, and spirit, the victory over sin in our nature is to be the same as it was in the life of Jesus Christ. He "condemned sin in the flesh."⁸ This brings us again to the very issue pro-

jected in the previous thought papers. Our concept of the incarnation determines our understanding of what that perfection is, which is required to vindicate God in this last hour of human history.

We are warned against making a mistake in this area. It is stated:

In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity.⁷

We go through all kinds of mental gymnastics over this sin problem, when a simple faith in the Example, and the provision that God has made for the reproduction of that example in man, would settle ^{the} whole issue theoretically and experimentally. When it comes to the nature of Christ's humanity, many of us are like the group who wrote to Sister White and said that if Christ had taken the same fallen nature that man possesses, He would have fallen under the temptations of the enemy.⁹ Then there are those (as with all of us), who recognize the terrible hold that our fallen nature has upon us all, who cannot grasp the fact that victory can be realized in this present life to the extent that a man can, while bearing this fallen nature, come to the place where *he wills to sin no more*. So these invent a theory that somehow God is going to perform a miracle, and take from them this nature prior to the second Advent, so that they can make a demonstration of righteousness before God in a different way than Jesus did.

The explanations of how this miracle is going to be accomplished have been described by different names. With the holy flesh men of Indiana it was called, "the Gethsemane experience." Today, the term, "final atonement", is borrowed from the Spirit of Prophecy to describe the same experience. But let us take a good look at the work of Christ our High Priest, and the "decided relation" that it sustains to us. This is spelled out for us in language that is too

plain to be misunderstood, - if we are willing to read. Note carefully:

While [a period of time] 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.¹⁰

In another place where it is stated that Jesus is "cleansing the sanctuary from the sins of the people", the question is asked, "What is *our* work?" The reply is given, "It is *our work* to be in harmony with the work of Christ. By faith we are to work with Him, to be in union with Him."¹¹ The very "how" of this work is spelled out for us. Read these words with discernment:

While Christ is cleansing the sanctuary, the worshipers on earth should carefully review their life, and compare *their character* with the standard of righteousness. As they see their defects, they should seek the aid of the Spirit of God to enable them to have the moral strength to resist the temptations of Satan, and to *reach the perfection* of the standard. They may be victors over the very temptations which seemed too strong for humanity to bear; for *divine power* will be *combined with* their *human effort*, and *Satan cannot overcome them*.¹²

This conquering in the battle with evil is not a one way street. "The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency."⁷ God wants those who vindicate His name to know for themselves victory over the besetments of this life. When the marriage of the Lamb is come, "His wife hath made herself ready." She is arrayed in fine linen, which is declared to be, "the righteousness of saints."¹³ All power has been provided for the saints to experience victory through the sacrifice and intercession of Christ. The Holy Spirit, whether in the former rain, or in the maturing latter rain, is imparted for one purpose, and one purpose only - to keep every repentant soul from sinning, thus enabling each to reach the perfection of the standard.¹⁴

To stand before a holy God without an intercessor, we indeed must have our robes spotless - "our characters purified from sin by the blood of sprink-

ling." But the method of achievement is stated simply - "through the grace of God, and their own dilligent efforts, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil." Then, "when *this work* shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing."¹⁰ What more does one desire?

Our problem is two-fold. We shy away from the reality of what it means to be a partaker of the divine nature; and we are not willing to exercise, "strong faith and agonizing cries"¹⁵ in pleading with God for victory which He has already provided, and desires us to experience. In the next thought paper we shall take a look at the first part of the problem that of being a partaker of the divine nature.

¹Peter C. Jarnes, The Sanctuary Restored

²Numbers 20:17

³Fundamental Adventism - I, October, 1968 Thought Paper

⁴Ellen G. White, Counsels to Editors, p. 30

⁵Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk ii, p. 32

⁶Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 671

⁷Ellen G. White, Our High Calling, p. 48

⁸Romans 8:3

⁹See Selected Messages, bk i., p. 408

¹⁰Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 425

¹¹Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, January 28, 1890

¹²Ibid., April 8, 1890

¹³Revelation 19:8-9

¹⁴Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 311

¹⁵Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 269

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