

April 1971

"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

AN ANSWER

In the October, 1970, issue of The Ministry, there appeared a research paper by Elder Erwin R. Gane of the Bible Department of Union College.¹ While the title suggested a discussion on "perfection", the main thrust of the study involved the incarnation. A series of questions were projected among which was the following - "Does E. G. White recognize certain basic differences between His [Christ's] human nature and ours?" Professor Gane's own answers to this question are concise. He writes:

According to E. G. White, Christ did not inherit at birth the fallen nature inherited by Adam's posterity. She makes it abundantly clear that in terms of heritage Christ was distinct from the posterity of Adam. . .

There can be no serious doubt that E. G. White teaches that Christ during the incarnation possessed the spiritual nature of Adam prior to the Fall. Although there are profound theological problems posed by this teaching, and although we find it difficult to accept that Christ in His human nature was any different to the rest of humanity, the conclusion is inescapable.

To read the Professor's answers in the light of the clear statements from the Spirit of Prophecy causes real concern to parents who are already disturbed by what our youth are being subjected to in our schools. Here is what *is written* by Ellen G. White:

It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man.²

The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, meet in Jesus.³

Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering

human nature, degraded and defiled by sin.⁴

Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature.⁵

In all fairness, it must be stated that in the research paper, Elder Ganē sought to support his answers by the use of the Spirit of Prophecy. But to seek to make the writings of Ellen G. White bolster conclusions contrary to the plain unequivocal assertions that have been quoted above from her pen, is to do violence to the inspired messages, and to make of non-effect "the testimonies of the Spirit."⁶

To accept the conclusions drawn by the learned professor - that Christ did not at birth inherit what the rest of the sons of Adam inherit - leaves us with but two alternatives. Either the mother of Christ was different from the mothers of the rest of mankind, or else the womb of Mary served only as a crib for the development of the human body of Jesus without, in the least, reacting upon that body. How apropos is the challenge of Elder E. J. Waggoner - "We need to settle, every one of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not." Then he added:

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, the marvel of the ages, the wonder of the angels, that thing which even now they desire to understand, and which they can form no just idea of, only as they are taught it by the church, is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh.⁷

Wherein did Elder Gane get off the track, and fabricate the thesis he gave in answer to his question? First he quoted a statement with which there can be no question if properly understood. In a letter to an Australian evangelist - W. L. H. Baker - Sister White wrote "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 an one as ourselves; for this cannot be."⁸ We are fully human; Christ was the union of the human and divine. It is when we fail to under-

stand this fact, and how the Spirit of Prophecy relates this concept to the incarnation, that we get all tangled up in our theology.

Every human being becomes an individual with a distinct self through the procreative act of a father and mother. Not so with Christ - He *was* a Distinct Individual prior to Bethlehem. This difference must become basic in any true comprehension of the incarnation. "In His Person, humanity inhabited by divinity"; Jesus gave an example of what man may become when man, altogether human, becomes a partaker of the divine nature. But unless we understand the nature of the humanity which Christ inhabited, we cannot properly present before fallen human beings the full potential of the gospel; and unless we as recipients of that gospel comprehend the fulness of the condescension of our Lord, we shall be unable to appropriate by faith that which has been accomplished for us. Consider the full import of this statement:

*In creation, Christ gave to humanity an existence outside of Himself. In redemption, He takes humanity unto Himself. He makes it a part of His own being. We become one with Him, as He is one with God. The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only begotten Son, binds the believer, body, soul, and spirit, to the divine-human nature of Christ. Through faith human nature is assimilated to Christ's nature. We are made one with God in Christ.*¹⁰

Now the question - what humanity did Christ make a part of His own being? Was it the humanity created for Adam prior to the fall, or was it the humanity of Adam, the transgressor? "Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body."¹¹ These perverted through sin are where the power of evil reigns. But Christ came to dethrone the devil, and to put an end to the reign of sin. His miracles in casting out devils were only illustrative of the power that was available to Him to overcome evil at its ground level. He stated clearly the essence of the kingdom of God when He replied to the caviling Pharisees in these words:

If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?

and then he will spoil his house.¹²

The strong man - the old man - Christ bound! In Christ the accuser of the brethren is cast down.¹³ Satan had declared that it is impossible for man to keep the precepts of Jehovah. But Jesus came to "unveil this deception. *As one of us*, He was to give an example of obedience. For this *He took upon Himself our nature*, and passed through our experiences."¹⁴

The kingdom of God must first be restored within before there can be any restoration without. This is where the great struggle began for the redemption of man. In the incarnation, Christ, the pre-existent One, consented to take upon His divine Self, or Ego, "fallen suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. . . He united humanity with divinity: [note, colon: definition follows] a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," because by so doing He could associate with the sinful, sorrowing sons and daughters of Adam."⁴ "But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner."¹⁵ "In His human nature He maintained the purity of His divine character. He lived the law of God, and honored it in a world of transgression, revealing to the heavenly universe, to Satan, and to all the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, that through His grace, humanity can keep the law of God. He came to impart His own divine nature, His own image, to the repentant, believing soul."¹⁶

Little do we understand the intensity of the inner struggle in the life and Person of our Lord. It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to have taken man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Christ, realizing that it "is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature" because of our "hereditary weakness" has "by passing over the ground which man must travel. . . prepared the way for us to overcome."¹⁷ Because "He knows how strong are the inclinations of the natural heart,. . . He

will help in every time of temptation."¹⁸ It was not with ease that no taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, nor was it a simple flip of the finger by which He refused to yield to the corrupting influence of sin.

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."¹⁹ This is the Man-child who was caught up to God and to His throne! This is the High Priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, who was in all points tempted like we are, yet did no sin.²⁰

¹Erwin R. Gane, "Christ and Human Perfection in the Writings of E. G. White", The Ministry, October, 1970, Supplement.

²Ellen G. White, The Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. II, p. 39

³Ellen G. White, Ms. 141, 1901 (7BC:926)

⁴Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, Dec. 20, 1900 (4BC:1147)

⁵Ellen G. White, "The Lord's Vineyard", Review & Herald, July 17, 1900

⁶Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. i, p. 48

⁷E. J. Waggoner, "A Sermon", 1901 General Conference Bulletin, Extra #17, p. 404

⁸Ellen G. White, Letter 8, 1895 (5BC:1129)

⁹Ellen G. White, "The Kingdom of Christ", June 13, 1896

¹⁰Ellen G. White, "The Word Made Flesh", Andreasen Collection #2

¹¹Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 346

¹²Matthew 12, 28-29 ¹³Revelation 12:10

¹⁴Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 24

¹⁵Ibid., p. 266

¹⁶Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, June 2, 1898

¹⁷Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, pp. 122-123

¹⁸Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, p. 177

¹⁹Hebrews 5:8-9 ²⁰Hebrews 4:15

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Note - Have you obtained your copy of Elder Robert J. Wieland's, CAMPUS CRUSADE'S "FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS": ARE THEY BIBLICAL? This analysis is thought provoking in the light of the fact that some of our church leaders are urging the use of this material by our laity in soul-winning activities. Write for your copy to 3268 West Nicolet, Banning, Calif., 92220. Enclose a dollar to cover costs; its worth many times that amount!

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A NOTE OF EXPLANATION

It was my sincere hope that at no time in these thought papers would I become involved in the race relations question. However, the continued propoganda appearing in our church publications (Review, Feb., 4, 1971, p. 22, and Insight, Feb. 23, 1971) with an emphasis which I believe is diametrically opposed to plain counsels of the Testimonies has caused me to release this - Critique.

Back in August 1970, I wrote to the President of the Southern Union protesting the appointment of a Negro as Sabbath School Secretary of the Union as a violation of the counsel which states:

"Opportunities are continually presenting themselves in the Southern States, and many wise, Christian colored men will be called to the work. But for several reasons white men must be chosen as leaders." (9T:202)

Elder H. H. Schmidt graciously replied and sent me his copy of the book by Ronald D. Graybill. He asked that after I had read the book that I give him my reaction. This critique was in response to this request.

True it may appear that the counsels given by the servant of the Lord in Volume Nine of the Testimonies are not the "in thing" at the present time. But surely experience and history of the past should teach us that the way of God who sees the future as we cannot, while that way may not be the "in thing" at any present time, is nevertheless the best way. And when the future as God has seen it, becomes present, how good it will be to know that the way of God was followed.

Such a course requires faith - the same kind of faith which would produce that righteousness by faith through which the work could be finished, and these earthly problems which have no human solution would be ended.

WHG