



January/72.

"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

AGAIN - "WHAT AND WHY?"

With this issue of "Watchman, What of the Night?", we begin our fifth year of publication. The first issue - January, 1968 - carried the title - "What and Why?" Now after four years we do well to ask again the same question. That first thought paper began with the following paragraph:

For the past decade, I have been concerned about the drift within our church. My concern was first awakened by articles appearing in the Ministry magazine which indicated a change in doctrine in the areas of the incarnation and the atonement. I wrote at that time to a vice-president of the General Conference asking him what was taking place. In his reply, he indicated that a group of men were studying together in Washington, and that a book would soon be published which would clarify the situation. That book was issued and was entitled, Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine. I ordered one immediately, but its teachings only increased my growing apprehension.

If in these four years, we could see some marked changes in renunciation of the heresy contained in the book, and an official repentance for having deviated from the basic truths of the Advent Movement, then there might be cause to hope. But such is not the case. Instead of repentance, there is a new publication - Movement of Destiny - which seeks to justify the apostasy contained in the previous publication - Questions on Doctrine. Now it is true that the brethren have declined to have Questions on Doctrine reprinted; but in the same action they did not include a recall of the book - Movement of Destiny. Thus the concern which motivated the issuance of the thought papers four years ago is still not only a valid concern, but the events during these four years have only served to intensify that concern.

Some in writing to me have referred to this monthly publication as a "letter". This is no doubt reminiscent of the Letters to the Churches which the late Elder M. L. Andreasen published. However, I have always considered these papers as "thought papers" for a very definite reason. After the infamous closing of Madison College, I was sent to Andrews University to complete work on a Master's degree. During the year (1964-1965), I could not erase from my mind the conviction that my future service to the church would be through the written word rather than through the spoken word. This idea did not appeal to me, as I did not enjoy writing, but much preferred to outline what I had to say, and give it verbally. However, I applied myself with special diligence to the class - "Research and Bibliography" - required of all graduate students. The material received and the tools acquired in this class under Dr. Leif Kr. Tobiassen have proved invaluable in the years since then. Then in the education classes taught by Dr. George Akers, I was introduced to "thought papers". Here was the answer should that impression that I could not erase become a reality. This would be the approach that I would use in seeking to arouse the Israel of God for "every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator, - individuality, power *to think* and to do."¹ If God's people could be stimulated to think through the issues and problems facing the church, reformation could follow, for right thinking is the basis for right action. Then too, "in the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one."² And since "the work of true education" is to train men and women "to be thinkers and not merely reflectors of other men's thoughts"¹ what could be better than "thought papers" to stimulate the thinking of the church of God!

In the first thought paper, I made a prediction which read like this:

There is no question that some will immediately label this objective as a "tearing-down" process, rather than a "building-up" endeavor. Some will seek to show that instead of using my time to rescue souls

from "Babylon", I was now turning "weapons" of warfare inward against the church. I will no doubt be accused by others as an "accuser of the brethren", or a disgruntled heretic.

To my happy surprise this prediction has received only a very limited fulfillment. It is true that some of the hierarchy have responded in a verbally violent and abusive way, and a few of the laity who have a perverted sense of loyalty have echoed the same sentiments. But by far the response has exceeded my fondest expectations. I have received constructive criticisms from friend and foe alike, and some have chosen to dialogue regarding the thoughts presented. However, lest I be misunderstood, there was a quote worth quoting from the first thought paper which clearly defines legitimate questioning of the establishment. It read:

Some persons really never utter a word of criticism simply because they don't care one way or another what happens, as long as they don't have to worry about it.

Have you ever noticed that the person or group that "criticizes" is often the one most concerned for the object of criticism? The person who really doesn't care about the school (or company, or country, or church) won't say a thing.

The stockholders in a company question the management - not the janitors. The janitor cares not so long as he gets paid. The stockholders feel involved - and are involved - with the company.³

Every minister and every lay member needs to ask himself the question - "Am I just a janitor in my thinking, or do I think as a stockholder?" However, in my conception, there was a deeper basis for these "thought papers" than this worldly figure of speech can convey, hence the concept of a Watchman on the walls of Zion. We believe that God has a church - His remnant people - who have a task to do, and who by the grace of God will complete that assignment - a revelation of the character of Christ in fallen human flesh. Once we have agreed on this point, we can read with understanding these words:

Just so long as God has a church, He will have those who will cry aloud and spare not, who will be His instruments to reprove selfishness and sins, and will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear.⁴

Tragically, there are those in positions of leadership who would label these "instruments" of God as "devisive" and "subversive". They seek to allay the fears and concerns of the people of God by misapplying certain references in the Spirit of Prophecy. While it is true that God never has and never will "give one man *new light contrary* to the established faith of the body"⁵; neither does He leave His church without a voice of warning when men in high places seek to pervert the established faith of the body, and remove the pillars of the firm foundation upon which the people of God are to walk. Those who occupy responsible positions "are ever to remember that position will never change the character or render men infallible."⁶ Therefore, to seek to silence the voice of God's "instruments" under the charge that the leadership is being sharply criticized is merely to claim infallibility. Those in positions of leadership who possess the spirit of a learner will welcome the voices of warning that God sends to His people through whatever source God may choose to use. But "when a responsible worker fails to learn this lesson, the sooner he is released from his responsibilities the better it will be for him and for the work of God."⁷

This then brings us to the challenge of the Lord through the prophet, Isaiah - "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, *what* of the night?"⁸ The reply is clear and concise:

"The morning cometh" -

When [the church] resists the evil and chooses the good, when she seeks God with all humility, and reaches her high calling in Christ, standing on the platform of eternal truth, and by faith laying hold upon the attainments prepared for her, she will be healed. She will appear in her God-given simplicity and purity, separate from earthly entanglements, showing that the truth has made her free indeed. Then her members will indeed be the chosen of God, His representatives.⁹

"Also the night" -

Great things shall come to pass after I [E. G. White] am gone. Satan will work as never before. All that can be shaken will be shaken out. We must draw near to God, for we cannot lean upon man or the crowd. We must know the Lord deeply as never before.¹⁰

I saw our Instructor pointing to the garments of so-called righteousness. Stripping them off, He laid bare the defilement beneath. Then He said to me: "Can you not see how they have pretentiously covered up their defilement and rottenness of character? 'How is the faithful city become an harlot?' My Father's house is made a house of merchandise, a place whence the divine presence and glory have departed! For this cause there is weakness, and strength is lacking."¹¹

The glory of the Lord had departed from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking.¹²

"If ye will enquire, enquire ye" -

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.¹³

"Return, Come."

¹Ellen G. White, Education, p. 17

²Ibid., p. 30

³Southern Accent, March 10, 1966, p. 2

⁴Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 2, p. 284

⁵Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 291

⁶Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 282

⁷Ibid., pp. 282-283

⁸Isaiah 21:11-12

⁹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, pp. 250-251

¹⁰Ellen G. White, Asiatic Mission News, Shanghai, China, July 1, 1915

¹¹See Footnote #9, p. 250.

¹²See Footnote #5, p. 210

¹³Ellen G. White, Life Sketches, p. 196

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Note - This year - 1972 - the thought papers will be issued on a monthly basis, but will be mailed two issues in each mailing, except to Canada and Mexico. This is being done to obtain the best postal rates and thus keep expenses to a minimum. As during the past year, "Watchman, What of the Night?" is being published by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi.

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