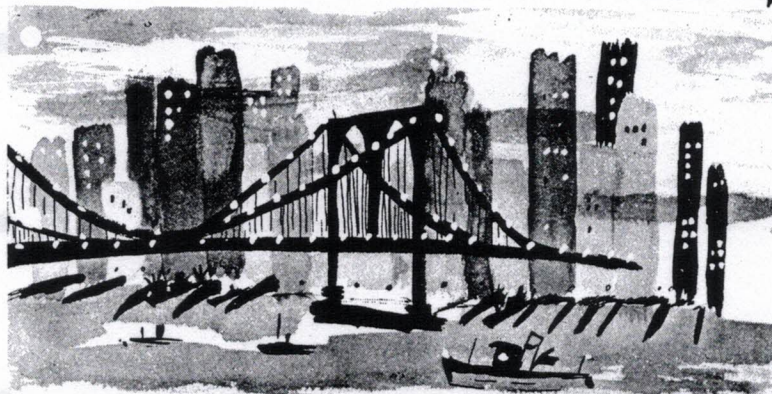


February 173.



"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

DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

This thought paper could have been entitled - "Doctrine, - Do We Really Need to Be Specific?" Or - "Why Should I Even Bother Myself to Study About the Incarnation?" Does it make any difference what I believe? Paul in writing to his son in the faith admonished him - "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."¹ Salvation, eternal life, is involved in the question.

The Scriptures reveal two bodies of doctrine, one for us to accept and know - "the doctrine of Christ"² - the other for us to shun - "the doctrines of devils".³ Doctrines - teachings, concepts, principles of life - are powerful. By these our lives are shaped; for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. By our inner reaction to them, and the decisions we make because of them, our characters are formed. "It is through false theories and traditions - ["doctrines of devils"] - that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character."⁴ "In His work on this earth, Christ saw, how by a disregard of the injunctions of God in regard to righteousness and true doctrines, evil would be made almost indistinguishable from good."⁵ Does it really make any difference what I believe? Am I really seeking to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly understanding the Word of Truth, or am I by default departing "from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"?³

Isaiah asked the question - "Who hath believed our doctrine?"⁶ Then he outlined prophetically the coming of Christ as the Saviour of His chosen people and the Redeemer of the world. He was to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" and was to be made "an offering for sin".⁷ If the Jews had really believed this prophecy, would they have failed to understand the message of John - "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"? But the vast majority of the nation of Israel followed their religious leaders in rejecting the message - the doctrine - brought by John the Baptist, and in turn joined these teachers of Israel in crying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" - the One to whom the doctrine of Isaiah and John pointed. Does it really make any difference what I believe? Do I really need to study for myself, what is truth? Do I really need to know?

Now more specifically - Does it make any difference what I believe in regard to the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ? Or can I be content to let my religious leaders, as the Jews did in Christ's day, do my thinking for me? Can I take the risk with the lesson of history written indelibly before me? John the beloved wrote: "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus is come in *the* flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."⁹ "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in *the* flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of antichrist."¹⁰ Paul states that "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He [Christ] also Himself likewise took part of *the same*."¹¹ Did Christ, or did He not, take part of the same flesh with all the weaknesses, tendencies, and inclinations that man whom He came to save has to cope with? Does it make any difference what I believe? Do I need to know what is being taught among us in regard to this doctrine? Yes! - one teaching is the doctrine of the antichrist - a doctrine of devils - and the other is the true doctrine of Christ!

The servant of the Lord has written:

The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study.¹²

Note carefully what this statement says. Not the divinity of the Son of God, but the humanity He assumed in becoming the Son of man is *everything* to us. This is to be our study! It is the means provided whereby we may find access to the Father. The pronouncement - "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"¹³ - was made in *the* flesh. He is the mystic ladder "set up on the earth", the top of which "reached to heaven."¹⁴ If in any way the base of that ladder is removed from the earth, and suspended in mid-air, to that extent the Saviour of the world is removed from those He came to save. It doesn't have to be lifted very high off the ground, just a little way, but the connection is broken, and a substitution must be inserted to keep the appearance of a connection. Are you aware of that possibility? Do you know what is taking place? Or doesn't it make any difference to you what *you* believe?

In another place we read:

When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven - the incarnation of the Son of God.¹⁵

This is written in the superlative - "the *most marvelous* thing that ever took place in earth or heaven." There is nothing to compare with it, nothing else that should so engage our thinking and study. We should "fix our minds" upon it! What? - the Incarnation of the Son of God! There are those who plead that the subject is too "deep" for them to comprehend. But if they would fix their minds upon this phase of their salvation as they fix their eyes on the television, it might surprise them, what they could understand.

"The whole of His [Christ's] earthly life was a preparation for the altar."¹⁶

The Cross - the great sacrifice and means of the atonement - could not have been, had not the incarnation been a reality. To destroy him that had the power of death, Christ gave His life. "He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man Christ could die."¹⁷ Have we related the Incarnation and the Cross? E. J. Waggoner declared: "Christ taking fallen sinful humanity upon Him, is Christ crucified."¹⁸

While it is true that there are mysteries connected with the Incarnation that the human mind cannot fathom, such as, the "painful process" by which Christ "assumed humanity",¹⁹ it is also true that "it is in this union that we find the hope of our fallen race."²⁰ In the study of this doctrine we find a blessing. "The study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth."¹² But when we will not read because we are afraid of the obligations the conclusions from such a study might place upon us, how can we expect to obtain the blessing that God has in store for us from such a study? Even as in the study of prophecy, there is a blessing; so also, in the study of the Incarnation. But the same principle applies - "there are those who will not read; the blessing is not for them."²¹ GC 341

When such a vital doctrine as the Incarnation of Christ is tampered with by religious leaders, whether it be the Catholic hierarchy in the promulgation of the dogma of the immaculate conception, or whether it be our own religious teachers telling us that Christ took the human nature of Adam before the Fall, and that His humanity was created by the Holy Spirit, rather than being derived from Mary, a daughter of fallen Adam, then we need not only to know, but to protest. "If unsound doctrine is introduced, the safety of the flock of Christ will be endangered; and it is the duty of those in authority, who are jealous for the truth as it is in Jesus, to make a firm, decided protest."²² But if those in authority fail to

FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ZAIRE

"At the time of our little visit today I should like to tell you something about a rather unusual development in the Trans-Africa Division. That portion of Africa formerly known as the Congo is now the country of Zaire. Early in the year 1972 the General Conference officers received a letter from Elder M. L. Mills, president of the Trans-Africa Division, which gave information concerning recent developments in the Zaire Republic as it related to our denominational work. Apparently President Mobuto had become dissatisfied with the proliferation of religious sects in the country, and the government adopted a procedure to reduce the number drastically. The new law required that all religious groups be registered with the government with the exception of three; namely Roman Catholics, Kimbanguists (a purely Zaire oriented church) and the Church of Christ [CCZ]. The new law laid down certain regulations for any other church organization which might wish to function in the country. One of the requirements in connection with the application for recognition was a deposit of 100,000 Zaires (the unit of local currency) in a bank in the country of Zaire. This amount represents approximately six months of the Seventh-day Adventist church's operating budget in the entire country of Zaire. The General Conference officers advised the Trans-Africa Division to make the deposit, and in due course, recognition was given to the Seventh-day Adventist church in this country."

*From a letter dated, September 25, 1972, signed by J. C. Kozel,
Assistant Treasurer of the General Conference.*

This information raises some very important questions that are left unanswered in this letter, or in the Review and Herald article on the subject dated, October 19, 1972.

1. Was the deposit returnable? Under what conditions? Has the money been returned since new regulations of the government placed our church as a "community" in the united Protestant Church of Christ of Zaire (CCZ)?
2. Or was this deposit like a performance bond? If our "community" as one of the groups in CCZ refuse to take part in the organic union called for by the president of CCZ, will the deposit be forfeited?
3. Has the deposit been placed into the operating budget of CCZ, since we agreed to become a part of the united Protestant Church of Zaire (CCZ)?

Unless the questions concerning the events in Zaire are clearly answered and documented, one wonders if the price of a "sell-out" has risen somewhat in the past 1900 years from thirty pieces of silver to 100,000 Zaires!

See January, 1973 thought paper special entitled "A Cover-up?" for a review of the report from the Review & Herald as compared with a report in Christianity Today.