



# "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*

## BASIC ADVENTISM

The Movement of 1844 - commonly called the Great Second Advent Movement - had only one basic objective, the preparation of a people to meet their God. Never before in the history of humanity was there the possibility of a group of people being alive on the earth to meet their returning Lord face to face. This would require a far different experience than was the lot of those saints who through the ages fell asleep in Jesus. This differentiation has been difficult for God's people to realize. As early as 1850, the servant of the Lord wrote:

I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary, through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God, and are protected in the time of trouble, must reflect the image of Jesus fully.<sup>1</sup>

Basic in Adventist eschatology is the concept that human probation closes prior to the return of the King of kings in the clouds of heaven. This close of human probation is marked by the completion of Jesus' intercession in the Most Holy Place. That time between the finishing of the final atonement and the coming of Christ is best described in the words of inspiration: -

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God, and their own dilligent efforts, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil.<sup>2</sup>

Elder James White wrote succinctly on this point. Noting Revelation 22:11-12 as proof of the close of all human probation, he stated:-

What a thought! Probation closed; the priestly work of Christ forever ended; and the time of trouble to be passed through! The mass of the people think that if a person is prepared to die, he is prepared for the coming of the Lord. But they do not consider the difference between dying, and standing alive to meet the Lord at His appearing. It is one thing to die in the Lord, to yield our spirits to Him while He is pleading for us before His Father's throne, and quite a different thing to stand in the time of trouble, after Jesus has ceased to plead in man's behalf; after His priesthood is closed, and He is preparing to come to redeem His own, and to take vengeance on His foes. They who now realize these things will bless Heaven that means has been devised in the mercy of God for the perfecting of the saints, and that we are not left without direct help from on high to carry on such a work as that which lies before us.<sup>3</sup>

It is not without significance that the chapter - "In the Holy of Holies" in Great Controversy from which the above statement regarding the character those living after the close of probation must possess, first appeared in the 1888 edition. Also it should be noted that while the statement quoted from Elder White, which clearly differentiated between the saints who die in Christ, and those who are to be translated, was written prior to his death in 1881, the book containing the statement was first published in 1888. One cannot escape the conclusion that the messages of Elders Jones and Waggoner were a part of the "means. . . devised in the mercy of God for the perfecting of the saints" in the progressive unfolding of divine truth. By these men truth was presented which placed the concepts of justification by faith in the frame work of the final atonement which Jesus is ministering for His people in the second apartment of the Heavenly sanctuary. This is basic Adventism, the very heart of the message entrusted to us. Any betrayal of this sacred trust is treachery to Him who has provided such a "means" through His infinite sacrifice and high priestly intercession.

To present the message of justification by faith in the setting of the final atonement, and not give the "how" of the realization of the experience which such a message requires would leave the presentation a lifeless theory. In the messages of 1888, and onward the "how" was interwoven in the concept of the Incarnation - Christ taking upon Himself the fallen nature of man, and demonstrating that man fallen could likewise live the life which He lived in the flesh. The Incarnation forms a basic and integral part of the presentations of both Jones and Waggoner, for to present the message of righteousness by faith separated from the true concept of the Incarnation is to present an incomplete and faulty message in regard to righteousness.

In 1888,<sup>4</sup> E. J. Waggoner after commenting on John 1:14 and Phil. 2:5-8 stated:

Other Scriptures that we will quote bring closer to us the fact of the humanity of Christ, and *what it means for us.*<sup>5</sup>

And how did Waggoner understand the "means" to work? Note - Christ "having suffered all that sinful flesh is heir to, . . . knows all about it, and so closely does He identify Himself with His children that whatever presses upon them makes a like impression upon Him, and He knows how much Divine power is necessary to resist it."<sup>6</sup>

In all the presentations of both Waggoner and Jones in the sessions of the Church following 1888 through 1901, the basic doctrine of the Incarnation was interwoven in the presentation of righteousness by faith. One statement from Jones will reveal the tenor of his thinking as he presented the subject at the 1895 General Conference Session. Here it is:

In Jesus Christ as He was in sinful flesh, God has demonstrated before the universe that He can so take possession of sinful flesh as to manifest His own presence, His power, and His glory, instead of sin manifesting itself. And all that the Son asks of any man, in order to accomplish this in him, is that the man will let the Lord have him as the Lord Jesus did. . .

Then God will so take us, and so use us, that our sinful selves shall not appear to influence or effect anybody; but God will manifest His righteous self, His glory, before men, in spite of all ourselves and our sinfulness. That is the truth. And that is *the mystery of God*, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," - God manifest in sinful flesh.<sup>7</sup>

We must sadly confess that the messages of Jones and Waggoner did not produce the results that Heaven intended, and after a decade deep concern developed among some of the revivalists within the Church. At the Camp Meetings and Worker's meetings during 1898, one of the ministering brethren - Elder A. F. Ballenger - emphasized the need for purity of life as a prerequisite for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Impressed with his messages was newly ordained minister in Indiana - S. S. Davis. Contacts through evangelism with the beginnings of modern Pentecostalism also left an impression upon his mind. The ultimate result was what we have called the Holy Flesh Movement. It finally involved a whole conference - but let us not forget that these men were basically good, well intentioned men.<sup>8</sup> They were seeking to realize the "how" of that righteousness which would lead to translation. Haskell in a letter describes "one of their great burdens." He wrote to Sister White:

One of their great burdens is moral purity, and "holy flesh" and "translation faith", and all such terms, which carry the idea that there are two kinds of "sons of God" - the adopted sons of God and the "born" sons of God. The adopted are those who die, because they will not have "translation faith". Those who are born, get "holy flesh", and there is no sin inside of them, and they are the ones that will live and be translated; and as they say, these who are "born" sons of God are not "going to heaven on the underground railway", meaning they are not going to die.<sup>9</sup>

These men of Indiana made a major alteration in their basic doctrines from the teaching of Jones and Waggoner. They taught that Christ took the nature of Adam before the Fall in becoming a man. Thus to be perfect for translation, they had to have the fallen nature eradicated in man so that he could reflect the image of Jesus fully.

It must not be forgotten that when the final confrontation came at the 1901 General Conference Session over this Indiana Awakening, Elder E. J. Waggoner spearheaded the attack. His sermon the night prior to Sister White's statement on "the experience of the brethren in Indiana" dealt with the subject of the Incarnation and how a true understanding was incompatible with the teaching of holy flesh.<sup>10</sup> Further, due consideration must be given to the fact that three of Ellen G. White's strongest statements describing the humanity of our Lord are dated 1900, and 1901 at the very height of the controversy regarding the Holy Flesh Movement in Indiana.<sup>11</sup> Documentation supports beyond question that the pivotal issue around which the whole of the Holy Flesh Movement revolved was the doctrine of the Incarnation. And do not forget that these men taught that Christ took the nature of Adam before the Fall which is now accepted as an orthodox doctrine in the Church today.<sup>12</sup> Would to God that we would be willing to accept what Sister White said concerning this Movement:- "None are to pick up any points of this doctrine and call it truth. There is not a thread of truth in the whole fabric."<sup>13</sup>

A more recent attempt to explain the "how" of the perfection which must be the saints who shall stand after the close of probation is to be found in Brinsmeadism - Decade I. Now let it be clearly understood that Robert Brinsmead himself was and is a good man with sincere intentions, even as the men of the Holy Flesh Movement. It is not an issue of persons, but a theological issue which involves our final and full character development. When Brinsmead began his so-called Awakening Movement, he was teaching the historic position of the church in regard to the Incarnation. This is clearly revealed in his first major publication - God's Eternal Purpose.<sup>14</sup> But with it he coupled the Holy Flesh doctrine - the eradication of the fallen nature. He

described it as a "blotting out" of not only the record of sin but also sin in the lives of the saints at the time of the "marriage" of the Lamb.

Since the historic and Biblical position on the Incarnation, and the eradication of the fallen nature are theologically incompatible, therefore, by 1968 divorce proceedings between the two concepts began to appear in Brinsmead literature. Brinsmead was leading his followers into the idea that Christ received a sinless human nature through the creative activity of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.<sup>15</sup> Finally he scuttled the whole of that Decade of teaching and went over to the viewpoint of the Evangelicals which is basically in agreement with certain theological trends in the Church centering in Avondale College and Andrews University. This trend is a denial of the historic position of the Church on the Incarnation, and the teaching of perfection - righteousness by faith - in such a way that the very essence of Adventism is compromised.

So that you the laity might know the truth, the Adventist Laymen's Foundation has prepared and published two manuscripts on the Incarnation, and one on the Holy Flesh Movement. The first manuscript traces the historic teaching of the Church with the emphasis on the Spirit of Prophecy writings, and how it was taught by the men whom the Lord raised up and sent to the Church in 1888. The final manuscript - In the Form of a Slave - sets forth the Biblical teaching on the Incarnation with Spirit of Prophecy comments which parallel these Bible pronouncements. The Holy Flesh Movement - a rewrite of a Thesis written by the author for the Course, Research in Theology, at Andrews University - not only traces the history of the Movement, but shows the threads of this theological fabric as they are intermingled into the teachings of the Church today.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 71

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 425

<sup>3</sup>Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White, pp. 430-431

<sup>4</sup>According to Dr. L. E. Froom, Waggoner's studies at the 1888 General Conference were published in book form under the title - Christ and His Righteousness. See Movement of Destiny, p. 189

<sup>5</sup>E. J. Waggoner, Christ and His Righteousness, p. 26

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 30

<sup>7</sup>A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message" - No. 15, General Conference Bulletin, 1895, p. 303

<sup>8</sup>We should not judge too severely these men of Indiana because some of the reforms which they advocated, such as moral purity, have been taught and practiced on some of the most highly respected campuses of the self-supporting work. The modern version of marital celibacy could be called Tindallism after its most recent advocate. It is not men as men that need to be judged - that is God's prerogative alone - but the truth or error of their teachings and practices that need to be called into account. It is truth - sacred and divine - that is the supreme deciding factor. Truth "is stronger and more powerful than anything else in the formation of a character after the likeness of Christ." IHP, p. 140. Error and apostasy have the opposite effect.

<sup>9</sup>S. N. Haskell, Letter to Ellen G. White #1, September 25, 1900. Ellen G. White, Document File #190.

<sup>10</sup>E. J. Waggoner, Sermon, April 16, 1901, 7 p. m., General Conference Bulletin, 1901, p. 403f.

<sup>11</sup>See Appendix B - The Holy Flesh Movement 1899-1901, pp. 53-56

<sup>12</sup>The Ministry, August, 1976, p. 6, col. 2. This is a report prepared by a committee appointed by the officers of the General Conference, May 30, 1973.

<sup>13</sup>Ellen G. White, as quoted by G. A. Roberts, "The Holy Flesh Fanaticism", Ellen G. White Estate, Document File #190

<sup>14</sup>Robert D. Brinsmead, God's Eternal Purpose, pp. 96-97

<sup>15</sup>Robert D. Brinsmead, "The Atonement in the Light of the Nature of Man," Present Truth, No. 2, 1968, p. 13

\*\*\*\*\*

IX - 11, (Nov., 1976)

CONTINUING COMMENT - In last month's thought paper, we noted the crisis which has developed in the Church over the inspiration of the writings of Ellen G. White. This has been heightened by the publication of Dr. Ronald L. Numbers' book - Prophetess of Health<sup>1</sup> - and the comments on the book in Time.<sup>2</sup> It is, tragically, the attitude of the Church regarding the Spirit of Prophecy which causes panic anytime and everytime questions are raised which question the integrity of Ellen G. White as a prophetess. This is not difficult to understand because the hierarchy use these writings as one of their chief weapons to keep the laity under their control. This compounds the tragedy.

The basic question that needs to be considered is simply - How does one view the Scriptures or any other inspired writing as to their credibility. The leaders of the Reformation set the Word of God above the Church. Their conviction was that "if the Scripture as the Word of God is in such doubt as to whether it is the Word of God or not and so needs the church to declare it to be such, then it is not the Word of God."<sup>3</sup> The Catholic Church takes the position that by grace given it by God, it can recognize the Word of God, and can, therefore, define what is inspired and what is not inspired. If the church can thus rule, then the church precedes the Inspired Word, and it can be said "that the church gives the New Testament to the church."<sup>4</sup> Instead of the Word of God being God's gift to His church, the church gives itself a gift!

In a recent series of Sabbath School Lessons - God Is Not Silent - the Catholic viewpoint was emphasized. An introductory comment to the lesson - "He Speaks Through His Church" - stated:

The same Holy Spirit, working through the apostles of Jesus Christ, gave us the New Testament and guided the church in the development of the canon of Scripture, determining which writings were "given by the inspiration of God."<sup>5</sup>

(This position raises an interesting question - At the same time the Church Councils were defining the canon of the Scripture, there were also declaring that the day for Christian worship was Sunday! Which Councils were being guided by the Holy Spirit, and which were not?)

The basic problem is the fruitage of this Catholic position. The Catholic Church is not slow in recognizing the potential. One writer has clearly stated:

The testimony as to the inspiration of the biblical writings is obtained only through the Church. It is from this point we first discern, in all its magnitude, the vast importance of the doctrine of Church authority, and can form a notion of the infinite multitude of things involved in that doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

If we, therefore, base our conviction as to the inspiration of the writings of Ellen G. White upon the authority of the church, then we are opening the door to a surrender of our very spiritual welfare to the authority of the Church. Instead of coming boldly and directly to the throne of grace, we permit a human organization to intervene between us and our great High Priest. In so doing, we violate the very first commandment, and make it impossible to truly observe the law of perfect liberty.

In my own experience, the matter of the Spirit of Prophecy was settled long ago, when as a youth I accepted this blessed Truth. I read carefully the book - Messages to Young People. Next to the Bible, it did more than any other book to mould my life. I heard the voice of God speaking to me from its pages. I knew it to be the Word of God. No church council or session had to tell me about the inspiration of the writings. But by so discovering, I have in my life placed the Word of God above the Church! So when questions are raised about the work of Ellen G. White stating that she quoted this thought from some source, and that the Spirit of God did not give it to her originally - this does not disturb me. For I know that as far as the teaching of the world's great thinkers is true, it but reflects the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. "Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the World."<sup>7</sup>

I am thankful to God that He has seen fit to give in these last days, when so much of the thoughts of men have been written, an inspired guide so that the precious gems of truth might be rescued from the rubbish of error. If, therefore, Ellen G. White was guided to glean from the thinkers on Health Reform certain truths to become the heritage of God's people, why should I question her as a Prophetess of Health? The problem is not the inspiration of Ellen G. White, but how the Church has presented her to the laity to keep the laity bound to the control of the leaders.

Having recognized that Ellen G. White was used by God to speak for Him, I can also recognize that she was a human being - an individuality with a few thoughts of her own. She was not a machine that merely wrote and spoke when the Holy Spirit turned on a switch button. I recognize, too, that she was willing to adapt to changing modes when these did not violate basic eternal truths. By so recognizing, I am not structured into a salvation by works program which is the hallmark of sincere and earnest reform movements that have come and gone within the church. I can see the purpose for which these reforms were intended, and adapt these principles to the day by day living which I face in 1976.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ronald L. Numbers, Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White. Published by Harper & Row.

<sup>2</sup>"Prophet or Plagiarist", Time, August 2, 1976, p. 43

<sup>3</sup>Bernard L. Ramm, The Evangelical Heritage, p. 27

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 25

<sup>5</sup>Adult Sabbath School Lessons, 2nd Quarter, 1976, p. 71 (Daybreak Series)

<sup>6</sup>John Adam Moehler, Symbolism, p. 293 (SDA Bible Students' Source Book, p. 130).

<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, Education, p. 14

HEADLINES

The Press - a Riverside, California newspaper, on page 1 of Section E carried on October 6, 1976, the following headline:

ADVENTIST STOCK FUND LOST NEARLY \$1 MILLION IN 1975

The staff writer revealed from his investigation that "at the end of 1975, the total assets in trust with the Southeastern California Conference of the church in Riverside were \$12,159,815.99, according to a church balance sheet." (Keep in mind, this is but the report of just one conference in the North American Division.)

"According to the church balance sheet, the value of the Southeastern California trust account's stock investments, which were made through the regional church investment program, decreased \$950,373.15 from the beginning to the end of 1975. The 24 per cent decrease. . . occurred at the same time the Dow Jones 30 Industrials, the major index of stock market trends, increased 38 per cent, the third largest percentage gain in history."

According to the local church leadership - Elder Walter Blehm and S. D. Bietz, this loss was only a "paper loss." Elder Cree Sandifer, the president of the Pacific Union Conference, "declined to reveal performance figures for the investment funds" but admitted that "two of the three investment counseling firms used by the union conference were released. . . because the church was not satisfied by the company's performances in selecting investments for the funds."

When the staff writer questioned by telephone Elder Robert Osborn, the world church official in charge of investments as to why the church is involved in such activities contrary to the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy, Osborn stated - "We have taken the position that Ellen White's counsel was directed more to the individual than to the church itself. . . She was writing that individuals should not speculate with money, but should put it into denominational work." Elder Osborn affirmed, however, that the church "feels it may invest in stocks."

Commenting on Elder Robert H Pierson's acknowledgement that the church was playing the stock market, the staff writer wrote - "Pierson said there were no problems, and the church had annually made a profit in the stock market."

On the same page in The Press was a second release captioned - OREGON PROBES ADVENTIST FUND. It revealed that the Attorney General's office in Oregon had begun an investigation into the trust funds administered by the North Pacific Union which is headquartered in Oregon. The Attorney General indicated it was a "consumer protection thing" and the office wanted to know if the people donating the money "are being taken." "We are concerned," he said, "about the amount of money that is apparently there with no checks." James Hoops, legal counsel for the Union countered that "the church headquarters has not been contacted by any persons who are dissatisfied with the administration of their trust accounts." A telephone conversation with a resident of the State of Oregon advised us that Hoops statement was a lie, and we have on our desk a photocopy of a newspaper account supporting such an assertion. Our laity need to awaken and withdraw their funds from revocable trust agreements, and press for investigations as to how the funds have been managed.

As other documented material comes to this desk, we shall keep you the laity informed.