



# "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*

## JESUS - THE MODEL MAN

This is the subject of the Sabbath School lessons for the Second Quarter of 1977. They were authored by Dr. Herbert Douglass, former associate editor of the Review, who is now president of the Carlson Mortgage and Development Company of Bismark, N. D. The focus of these lessons will be "on Jesus, God become man. . . Over the centuries great biblical themes have become isolated from their connection with Jesus. The major reason for this misunderstanding is that Christian thinkers became confused about Jesus. The misunderstanding by Christian thinkers of Jesus' identity, origin, mission, and intercession seems automatically to warp and distort their view of every other biblical topic." (Teacher's Edition, p. 16)

In these lessons the subject of Jesus' incarnation is presented in harmony with the historic position of the church. This is the first time since the book - Bible Readings for the Home Circle - was altered in 1949 to reflect a new view on the incarnation and the sinless life of Jesus in relationship to the believer, that there has been a clear cut in-depth presentation of the human nature of Christ, and what it can mean for the believer for the church to study in the Sabbath School. It is true that Dr. Douglass authored a brief series of editorials bearing on this theme in 1972 which has been the basis for the anathema expressed by Dr. Ford and the faculty of Avondale College. The study of these lessons are to be highly recommended, not only by the regular members of the church, but also by any and all dissident groups who have discarded the regular quarterlies because of their insipid and philosophically orientated approach and content. This would be a good quarter's lessons to renew the habit of daily lesson study for every member of all Sabbath schools. We would also recommend in connection with these lessons some research to familiarize one's self with the deviations that have occurred in our teaching of the doctrine of the incarnation since 1950. This has been provided in the manuscript - An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Naturally, such an abrupt return to the historic teaching of the church has not gone unchallenged by the forces within the church who followed the leadership during the decades following 1950, and who have continued to accept this apostasy and compromise with truth. This Special Report will note only one reaction - the reaction of the group referred to by Dr Douglass in a letter dated, March 11, 1975, to a church member in Australia as "the new and strange Ford-Brinsmead mateship." Other centers of apostasy in regard to the incarnation, such as Andrews University, and some of the theological departments of our Senior Colleges, have yet to be heard from. It is possible that Spectrum, the

journal of the Association of Adventist Forums will open its pages for the dissent which might come from these ivy towers.

The latest circular to come from the "strange Ford-Brinsmead mateship" is entitled, "Adventist News Service", and is also written by Ray Martin, as was the Objective Digest Report. As one reads the circular, and compares the same with the Sabbath School lessons for the Second Quarter of 1977, one wonders how much the author has imbibed the policy of the American news media in releasing "managed" news reports. ("Managed" news releases began with the Kennedy administration. It is a term for propaganda which is written to mold the thinking of the hearer or viewer into a pre-determined pattern.)

This so-called "Adventist News Service" makes the following charges against what it calls "the Douglass Lesson Quarterly." It states:

- 1) "It [the Quarterly] presents the idea that the Second Person of the Godhead divested Himself of His divine powers and prerogatives and that, in becoming a man, He did not retain His divine nature."
- 2) "There is nothing said about Christ being our Substitute, Representative, and Surety, who lived and died vicariously on the sinner's behalf."
- 3) These lessons "advocate perfectionism and the sinful nature of Christ."
- 4) The theology of these lessons is "Roman Catholic and not Protestant."

Let us note these points one at a time, and see what the Lessons do teach. On Point #1, the "Adventist News Service" clarifies their objection in a postscript as follows - the question "is whether the incarnate Christ retained all the powers and prerogatives of divinity and all the essential properties of His divine nature. The Quarterly says He did not." The Quarterly reads:

When Jesus became flesh, He divested Himself of the powers of deity and became absolutely dependent upon the Father and the Holy Spirit. . . Although Jesus could have retained the same nature He had possessed throughout eternity, He "became" dependent on God as all other human beings are. (*Lesson 2, Part 5.*)

In support of this position, John 5:30 is quoted, and Phil. 2:6-7 is noted. And what the Quarterly states is an accurate summary of these verses. Further, the Spirit of Prophecy clearly teaches:

He humbled Himself and took mortality upon Him. As a member of the human family, He was mortal. (*5BC:1127 col. 1*)

While bearing human nature, Jesus was dependent upon the Omnipotent for His life. In His humanity, He laid hold of the divinity of God, and this every member of the human family has the privilege of doing. (*"The Word Made Flesh" - Andreason Collection #2*)

And in direct comment on John 5:30, the servant of the Lord wrote - "He rested not in the possession of almighty power. . . That power He had laid down, and He

says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' He trusted in the Father's might." (D. A., pp. 335-336)

On Point #2 that nothing is said "about Christ being our Substitute, Representative, etc.," one needs to note only the following from the first two lessons:

- Page 18 - "Because He became truly man, we have a High Priest who is able 'to sympathize with our weaknesses.'"
- Page 47 - (Teacher's Edition) Under the caption - "Meaning of the Incarnation" - it reads: "Under the mighty impulse of His love, He took our place in the universe, and invited the Ruler of all things to treat Him as a representative of the human family." (This of course is from 7BC:924, col. 2)
- Page 28 - (Teacher's Edition) The question is asked - "Why did Christ come?" In the series of answers the following are given - "To remove from man the guilt of sin." And - "To become our high priest." On the same page, the teacher is asked to have the class commit to memory, D. A., p. 25, which begins - "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves."

Evidently the "Ford-Brinsmead mateship" is totally unaware of the breadth of the atonement. We read:

It was not alone His betrayal in the garden or His agony upon the cross that constituted the atonement. The humiliation of which His poverty formed a part was included in His great sacrifice. (Ms. 12, 1900; 6BC:1103)

Now to Point #3. The use of the expression - "the sinful nature of Christ" is a smear technique. The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are clear that Jesus Christ did not have a sinful nature, but that He took upon Himself "our sinful nature." Twice this emphasis is given - Medical Ministry, p. 181 and Review & Herald, Dec. 15, 1896 - besides other references which state the matter similarly as stated in the Youth's Instructor, Dec. 20, 1900, which reads - "Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin." (4BC:1147). In failing to understand the full nature of Christ as our Redeemer, the reality of the fact is mitigated that "Christ became one flesh with us in order that we might become one spirit with Him." (D. A. p. 388)

Point #4 is a charge introduced by Brinsmead's side-kick, Geoffrey Paxton, who is quoted in the "Adventist News Service" as declaring the Lesson Quarterly "contained 'heresy,' 'philosophical nonsense,' and that it was 'Roman Catholic and not Protestant theology.'" Anyone who has only an elementary knowledge of Catholic teaching knows that it is Catholicism which has sought to present Jesus as one who was preserved free from any taint of what is called original sin by having Mary so preserved. Variations of this theme which can be found in Evangelical sources teach that a part of the womb of Mary was sanctified by the Holy Spirit and from this sanctified humanity, Jesus received His human nature. All such variations are but a modification of the original Catholic concept. This same heresy was found in the book, Questions on Doctrine, p. 383. What the SS Quarterly for Second Quarter of 1977 is simply doing is teaching basic, historical Adventist doctrine derived from a truly Old and New Testament theology.

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