

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

THE COMPROMISES OF THE PAST SIX DECADES

Trying to Find an Answer to the Incarnation Question

Editor's Preface

There is a growing agitation in the Community of Adventism to bring together various fragments of the splintered community on a subject which had divided Adventism - the doctrine of the Incarnation. With three different understandings prevalent and each admissible for an Adventist in good and regular standing to hold, we must at least consider how Adventism arrived at this disunity.

Publications already published have noted and publications to be published will note that following 1950, there was a marked change in the Church's teaching in regard to the nature Christ assumed in becoming flesh. This is very true; but was it an instantaneous change, or was there a gradual departure from the truth held by the Church on this doctrine in its beginning? We suspect that there was a gradual change. In this Special Issue of WWN, we will trace the record from the early days of this movement, noting the consistent teaching till 1930. What appears to be a "below the surface" movement for change cannot be concretely documented. There is suggestive evidence that such was the case, and there are pieces of the puzzle with possible answers identified, their whereabouts unknown as yet.

The major problem is that those who digress from the original stated position of the Church are presenting as an alternative the deviant voices of the past as reflected in the Holy Flesh Movement in Indiana at the close of the 19th century. The fact remains that any compromise with the position held by the Adventist Church as reflected in the 1872 Statement and amplified in the 1888 Message is only echoing to a lesser degree the Roman dogma of the Immaculate Conception. We do well to note what Dr. E. J. Waggoner said in a sermon preached at the 1901 General Conference session the evening before the Holy Flesh Movement was brought to a end the following morning. This special issue of WWN closes with Dr. Waggoner's challenge - "We need to settle it, everyone of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not." And he added - "a great many have the marks yet."



The Compromises of the Past Six Decades

Trying to Find an Answer to the Incarnation Question

For the first eight decades of the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its teaching on the doctrine of the Incarnation was consistent. During this period, there was one exception to this consistency - the teaching of the Incarnation by the men who led the Holy Flesh Movement (1899-1901).

The Statements of Belief published in 1872, 1874, in the *Yearbooks* for the years, 1889, 1905, and from 1907-1914, all read the same:

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father . . . ; that He took on Him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that He dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our example . . .

Again during this period, there was one exception. In 1894, the headquarters Church at Battle Creek drew up their own Statement of Beliefs. It read:

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, . . . that He took on Him the nature of man, for the redemption of our fallen race; that He dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our example . . .

Much has been made of the Battle Creek Statement. It is true that this statement was included in a publication of the Church's officers and members. It can be assumed to have been approved by the Church. Since it was the headquarters Church with a membership at that time of over 1500 members, including all the officers of the General Conference as well as the editor of the *Review & Herald*, Uriah Smith, who helped formulate the original 1872 Statement, it could be conceived as a formidable weight of evidence in a discussion of the beliefs of the Church. Froom in his book, *Movement of Destiny*, uses this factor in seeking to show that the Church at this early date was altering its perception of the doctrine of the Atonement (pp. 338-342). The essence of this alteration on the doctrine of the Incarnation is reflected in the 1931 Statement which was formally adopted in 1946.

In connection with this Statement of the Battle Creek Church, we should note a point or two in regard to the *Yearbook*. It was first authorized by the General Conference Committee in 1882. Its contents made it an authoritative voice of the Church's position and standing. (See *SDA Encyclopaedia*, rev. ed., p. 1336) The 1889 edition was the first year to include a section devoted to "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists" which contained the statement on the Incarnation as noted above. None appeared again till 1905 during the Kellogg apostasy. Then it appeared regularly from 1907 through 1914, the year preceding the death of Ellen G. White. However, the *Yearbook* was not published

between 1895-1903, being replaced by the General Conference *Bulletins* during that time.

This does present some interesting questions which have remained unanswered. Why did the Battle Creek Church choose to formulate an altered Statement of Beliefs from the original 1872 Statement? Why were no statements published after 1899 - the year following the October, 1888, GC Session, except for the Battle Creek Statement in 1894, until 1905? Why the break at the time of Ellen G. White's death?

However, during this period, the publications of the Church and the Writings carried an unequivocal position on the doctrine of the Incarnation. As early as 1852, James White wrote in the *Review & Herald*; "Like Aaron and his sons, [Jesus] took upon Him flesh and blood, the seed of Abraham." (Sept. 16) This echoes the concept in the 1872 Statement in which he participated with Uriah Smith in formulating. In 1854, J. M. Stephenson, answering the question, "What blood was shed for the remission of sins?" - replied - "Was it not the identical blood which had flowed through the veins of Mary, His mother, and back through her ancestry to Eve, the mother of all living? Otherwise He was not 'the seed of the woman,' of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David." (*Review & Herald*, July 15) Then in 1858, Ellen White wrote in *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 25 - "Jesus told [the angels] ... that He should take man's fallen nature, and His strength would not be even equal to theirs." Again in Vol. 4a of the same set, she wrote in 1864 - "It was in the order of God that Christ should take upon Himself the form and nature of fallen man." (p. 115)

Apart from the Writings of Ellen White, there was little discussion of Christology in Adventism until 1888 because the ministry was preaching the law until they were "as dry as the hills of Gilboa, which had neither dew nor rain." (*R&H*, March 11, 1890) In 1889, Ellen White clarified what she meant by using the expression "fallen nature" which Christ took upon Himself. Writing of the symbolism of the ladder which Jacob saw, she stated - "Christ was the ladder. ... This ladder reached from the lowest degradation of earth and humanity to the highest heavens." (*Signs of the Times*, July 29)

In 1888 and after, E. J. Waggoner in his presentations of Christology clearly stated:

The fact that Christ took upon Himself the flesh, not of a sinless being, but of sinful man, that is, that the flesh which He assumed had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject, is shown by the statement that He "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Christ and His Righteousness, pp. 26-27; 1892)

After 1891, when Ellen White went to Australia, and 1892 when E. J. Waggoner accepted assignment in England, the burden of the message of Righteousness by Faith, and its associated Christology fell upon A. T. Jones. In 1895, at the General Conference Session, Jones told those in attendance that they were there "studying the same subject that we have

been studying these three or four past years; but God is leading us further along in the study of it." (*GC Bulletin*, p. 330) At this session, commenting on John 1:14, Jones asked - "Now what kind of flesh is it?" In answering this question, and asking another, he amplified the answer to both:

What kind of flesh alone is it that this world knows? - Just such flesh as you and I have. This world does not know any other flesh of man, and has not known any other since the necessity of Christ's coming was created. Therefore, as this world knows only such flesh as we have, as it is now, it is certainly true that when "the Word was made flesh," He was made just such flesh as ours is. It cannot be otherwise. (ibid., 232)

There is no question that there was opposition to the 1888 Message, and the men who gave it. This has been well documented by Wieland and Short. (See *A Warning and Its Reception*) This opposition centered in Battle Creek, and Uriah Smith was a part of that opposition. The question must be asked if this fact had anything to do with the variant Statement produced by the Church there? Off setting this possibility, but not negating it, is the publication in the *Review & Herald*, August 22, 1912 as one of the "General Articles" of that issue, the Statement of Beliefs as was published in the 1912 *Yearbook*, with the notation, "By the late Uriah Smith." (Smith died in 1903.) The statement on the Incarnation is the same as was written in 1872. Also an interesting factor, the editor in 1912 was F. M. Wilcox, who Froome avers formulated the 1931 Statement (*Movement of Destiny*, p. 413), and which altered the wording on the doctrine of the Incarnation, reflecting the overtones of the Battle Creek Statement on this doctrine.

We must pause for a moment, and analyze the two exceptions to the stated doctrine of the Incarnation during the first eight decades of Adventist history. First the Battle Creek Statement, and with it, we can compare the 1931 statement formulated by Wilcox. The three statements, 1872, 1894, and 1931, read in time sequence:

Christ "took on Him the nature of the seed of Abraham." (1872)
Christ "took on Him the nature of man." (1894)
Christ "took upon Himself the nature of the human family." (1931)

The difference of these three statements could be dismissed as a matter of semantics. Yet there is an unquestionable clarity in the 1872 Statement - "the nature of the seed of Abraham" is the fallen nature of mankind. The Battle Creek Statement leaves the door open, for Adam possessed "the nature of man" both before and after his Fall. The "nature of the human family" could be construed as the "fallen nature" since there was no "family" until after the Fall. Yet the emphasis of wording, in context, is weighted toward the concept that Jesus accepted humanity, without regard to defining the nature of that humanity. Further, one must wonder, why the expression, "the seed of Abraham" was chosen for

the 1872 statement, when a more emphatic statement would have been forthcoming had Romans 1:3 been used - "the seed of David according to the flesh" - which Paul declared to be "the gospel of God." (1:1) This "gospel of God" was the emphasis in the 1888 Message.

The major "exception" during the time period under consideration was the Holy Flesh Movement of Indiana (1899-1901). The last two issues of the *Review & Herald* for 1900 carried a two part editorial on "The Faith of Jesus." Though not initialled, it was written by A.T. Jones who at the time was co-editor with Uriah Smith. Based on Hebrews 1 & 2, it clearly taught that Christ took upon Himself the fallen nature of man. To these editorials, R. S. Donnell, president of the Indiana Conference, responded in a series of articles in the *Indiana Reporter*, the local conference paper. The articles were titled - "Did Christ Come to This World in Sinful Flesh?" When he republished these articles in 1907 in self defence, he commented - "Why I was charged with teaching 'Holy Flesh' I know not, unless it was in my article(s), as well as in the pulpit, I took the negative side of the question." It is interesting that Donnell perceived of the epithet attached to the movement as connected with their teaching on the Incarnation. They certainly did not teach that they would receive "holy flesh" in this life. This factor is all the more important when considered against the backdrop of what Ellen White is quoted as saying at the demise of the Movement at a constituency meeting in Indianapolis. Elder G. A. Roberts, who was present at the meeting quoted her as stating - "When I am gone from here, 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." (Ellen G. White Estate, Document File #190)

What did Donnell teach? He taught two concepts which have reappeared in Adventist perceptions of the Incarnation since 1950. The first reads:

When Christ came to this earth He came to make Himself an offering for sin and, in order to make an offering that would be acceptable to the Father, He must at least be as free from sin in every particular as was Adam before he fell. It was because of this that He could not step into some human body already on earth, and purify it and go to the cross in that body and offer the sacrifice. No; that body had known sin in itself, and therefore was guilty of the same sins that all the rest of humanity had committed, and as a consequence needed a savior itself, and would not and could not be an acceptable sacrifice. There were plenty of bodies here on earth, but they were all in the same condition; they all had sinned and come short of the glory of God. But in order to save man, Christ must enter humanity, and because all were sinners, and not a body could be found that was suitable, what had to be done? A body had to be made for the occasion. (What I Taught in Indiana, pp. 8-9)

The second stated:

And now, how must He come? Must He come possessed of the inherent traits of the fallen race, or while He comes as a man, should He not come as a man redeemed, . . .? This must be so,

for Paul. . . says: "For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified (not those He is going to sanctify, but they who are sanctified) are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Notice that it is the sanctified ones who He is not ashamed to call brethren. Further it is the sanctified ones of whose flesh He partakes. (Heb. 2:14 quoted) (*ibid.*, pp. 4,5)

Then in answer to a question asked him by the incoming conference president, Donnell wrote:

Christ's nature was a divine human nature, a nature which prior to the new birth, has not been possessed by a single son or daughter of Adam since the fall. (ibid., p. 20)

Before discussing the compromises of the last six decades (1930-1990), let us fix in our minds the clarity and preciseness of what the Church taught in regard to the human nature Christ assumed in becoming incarnate. These citations will not be exhaustive, but the few cited will be representative. Ellen White wrote at the turn of the century during the time of the Holy Flesh Movement:

Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. . . . He united humanity with divinity; a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. He united Himself with the temple. (Youth's Instructor, Dec 20, 1900)

Again:

In Christ were united the divine and the human - the Creator and the creature. The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and the nature of Adam, the transgressor, meet in Jesus. (Ms. 141, 1901)

The first Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly was published in 1889. During the years from its first printing to 1930 a number of lessons discussed the doctrine of the Incarnation. Two illustrations of the teachings found there will suffice. In 1923, a Sabbath School lesson on "The Godly Life" in its first note declared:

Christ took upon Himself the infirmities and sins of the flesh. . . . but to every sin He died, every lust He crucified, every selfish desire He denied Himself - all for our sakes. (2nd Qrt., p. 22)

Again from a 1928 Quarterly:

Carnal, natural man cannot abolish his enmity against God. It is a part of his nature. It is intertwined in every fibre of his being. But Jesus took upon Himself our nature of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), "in all things...to be made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17), "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3); He met and "abolished in His flesh the enmity," "the carnal mind" (Rom. 8:7), "the mind of the flesh" (Rom. 8:7 ARV). He condemned sin in the flesh for us forever. (1st Qrt., p. 15)

Not only did the Sabbath School Lesson Quarterlies proclaim a consistent message on the nature Christ assumed in the Incarnation, but books published during this period also echoed the concept. One example will illustrate the position taken. In 1924, Elder Meade MacGuire's book, *The Life of Victory*, was released. He noted that Paul spoke of the fact that in the body is a law "warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." What is the answer to this aspect of the sin problem? MacGuire's answer read:

There is only one means of deliverance from this inherent law of sin. That is Christ. He took humanity upon Him. He conquered sin while in a body which had come under the hereditary law of sin. He now proposes to live that same sinless life in my members. His presence completely counteracts the power of the law of sin. (pp. 17-18)

There are other citations that could be quoted from the Sabbath School lesson quarterlies from 1896 to 1930 which spoke the same message; and other books, such as *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, which taught the same thing. Those chosen came from the final decade of the eight decades of Adventist teaching on the subject. In 1931 a change was made in the Statement of Beliefs on this doctrine. Whether it was merely semantics, or was a substantive change may be open to question, but the fact remains the wording was changed.

This new wording was reflected in the Sabbath School lesson quarterlies. In 1941, an introductory note read:

Through sin man finds himself without hope and without God in the world. "The wages of sin is death" - death confronts every son and daughter of Eve. Into this hopeless picture the Son of God presents Himself. Because of His infinite love, He took upon Himself the form of a man and the frailties of a long ancestral line. Having accepted human nature, He endured the sentence of sin in His body on the cross. He suffered the death that is ours because of sin, that we might live the life that He merited because of righteousness. This is the only avenue by which man might escape the penalty of sin and enter into life - the more abundant life here, and everlasting life in the eternal kingdom. (4th Qrt., p. 6; emphasis supplied)

While books were still being released after 1930 from the Church's publishing houses teaching the doctrine of the Incarnation as stated during the first eight decades, such as *Facts of Faith* by Christian Edwardson, and *The Wine of Roman Babylon* by Mary E. Walsh, a revision was made in 1949 in *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* which completely altered the teaching. (Compare the study notes of a 1915 edition with the same notes in a post 1950 publication of the book on the reading, "A Sinless Life.")

Further, F. D. Nichol, whom F. M. Wilcox asked to critique the 1931 Statement which he had written (*Movement of Destiny*, pp. 413-414), published a book in 1932 - *Answers to Objections*. A portion of this book with considerable new

matter was published in 1947 as *Reasons for Our Faith*. Then in 1952, a new edition of the 1932 book, with material from it and the 1947 publication was released under the original title. In this book, Nichol discusses the Incarnation. He wrote in answer to an objection, "Seventh-day Adventists teach that, like all mankind, Christ was born with a sinful nature," that "Adventists believe that Christ, the 'last Adam,' possessed, on His human side, a nature like that of the 'first man Adam,' a nature free of any defiling taint of sin, but capable of responding to sin, and that that nature was handicapped by the debilitating effects of four thousand years of sin's inroads on man's body and nervous system and environment." (p. 393)

If language has any meaning, the only meaning that can be deducted from what Nichol wrote is that Christ had the pre-Fall nature of Adam, and not the post-Fall, "sinful nature," and that the only difference between Adam in Eden and Christ four thousand years later was physiological. Is this what he really meant?

At the close of the answer given, Nichol appends "a word of counsel to some of our Adventist writers and speakers." Suggesting that while we use the term "sinful flesh" to mean that Christ "took on Him the seed of Abraham," those who see the Scriptures through Calvinistic eyes read into the term "something that Adventist theology does not require." (p. 397) Here is an area for exploration.

In this counsel, Nichol is actually quoting from the pre-1931 Statements of Belief. This leads then to another question. Was the suggested change in the 1931 Statement in regard to the Incarnation made so as to deflect the attacks from the growing influence of Evangelical Fundamentalism? However, there is another factor in this picture. Nichol must have known that *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* had been revised and altered in regard to the doctrine of the Incarnation. Was that change also perceived as altering what Adventist theology of the Incarnation does not require?

Keeping in mind the time frame in which the change in *Bible Readings* was made and Nichol's revised book was published, we are left with some other unanswered questions. In 1952, a Bible Conference was held in the Sligo Park Seventh-day Adventist Church with representatives present from all parts of the World field. The planning committee for the conference included both Rebok, who made the revision in *Bible Readings*, and Nichol. What is interesting is that no one was assigned the subject of the Incarnation, and only passing reference was made to it by one speaker in his presentation (*Our Firm Foundation*, Vol. 2, pp. 43-44), yet other aspects of Christology were presented. Why? Had a division developed in Adventism, though still below the surface, which did not permit an open presentation of the subject? Wieland and Short in their warning to the General Conference in 1950 - *1888 Re-Examined* (original edition) - and which helped to trigger the Bible Conference, suggests the possibility (pp. 186-188), but in the following chapter no documentation is offered.

Before detailing the events at the time the issue did surface into a full scale controversy within Adventism, we need to keep in mind a little noted report by Froom of some unofficial studies at the Church's headquarters. In his book, *Movement of Destiny*, he stated that soon after the issuance of the 1931 Statement of Beliefs, during the years till 1935, certain leaders - and he names a few (p. 430) - gathered together on Sabbath afternoons for Bible study and dialogue on subjects which he calls "the eternal verities." He writes - "There were no agendas. No minutes were kept, no reports passed out. (Copious notes, however, were taken by some individually.)" (p. 429) [If someone knows who kept such notes, perhaps Froom himself did, and where these might be found, it would be a contribution, even in this late hour, to truth if such a one would step forward with the information] The question must remain - what influence did these meetings and the men who attended them have on the direction which Adventism has taken today?

Three years after the 1952 Bible Conference, Seventh-day Adventists would begin their dialogue with Calvinistic Evangelicals which would change the face of Adventism and splinter its ranks. These conferences during 1955-1956 brought certain Adventist leaders face to face with Barnhouse and Martin in a discussion of various major teachings of the Church. The result of the questions asked, and the answers given in writing to the Evangelicals, the Adventist conferees perceived of a resultant book being published which would be "a definitive statement of contemporary Adventist theology, in convenient reference book form." (*Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 4, #2, p. 41) Following its publication in 1957, it was used in the Bible classes of the Church's colleges, which in turn has had its effect on the ministry of the Church in the decades following. Observe the use of the term, "contemporary." In its position on the incarnation, it did not resonate, as we shall observe, the consistent teaching of the first eight decades of Adventist thought. What is even more interesting is that the Adventist conferees perceived they "were supported by the 1931 statement of fundamental beliefs," and the Evangelical conferees because of this 1931 Statement "were satisfied that [their Adventist counterparts] were presenting contemporary Adventist doctrines." (*ibid.*, p. 38) This only compounds the confusion of the present as one seeks to arrive at the truth as to what the word change in the 1931 Statement actually meant in regard to the Incarnation. Did it reflect a change in Adventist thinking that could be called "contemporary" in contrast to the previous decades of teaching, or was it merely an attempt to avoid Calvinistic interpretations of past statements? Whatever, it played into the hands of those who compromised basic truths at these Conferences of 1955-56.

While the major issue of concern from the viewpoint of the Evangelical conferees was the doctrine of the Atonement - a completed atonement on the cross, or a final atonement following the sacrificial atonement of the cross (*Eternity*, September, 1956, p. 43), Adventist teaching on the Incarnation was altered. The book, *Questions on Doctrine*, taught that "although born in the flesh, [Christ] was nevertheless God,

and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendent of Adam." (p. 383) The word, "exempt" has theological overtones inasmuch as this is the term used in Catholicism as they explain their doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Cardinal Gibbons in his book, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, wrote - "Unlike the rest of the children of Adam, the soul of Mary was never subject to sin, even in the first moment of its infusion into the body. She alone was exempt from the original taint." (p. 171, 88th ed., emphasis supplied)

The question then must be confronted. If Christ was "exempt," what do the Scriptures mean when they declare that Christ "took our infirmities on Himself, and bore the burden of our diseases." (Matt. 8:17, 20th Cent.) The explanation given in *Questions on Doctrine* reads:

These weaknesses, frailties, infirmities, failings are things which we, with our sinful, fallen natures, have to bear. To us they are natural, inherent, but when He bore them, He took them not as something innately His, but He bore them as our substitute. He bore them in His perfect, sinless nature. Again we remark, Christ bore all of this vicariously, just as vicariously He bore the iniquities of us all. (pp. 59-60)

When the book was published, reaction was not long in coming. M. L. Andreasen responded with *Letters to the Churches*. Others spoke up, and paid the price for dissenting from this new "contemporary" Adventism. The division within Adventism became so acute that Robert J. Spangler, editor of *Ministry* (June, 1985), featured a debate between Norman Gullett and Herbert Douglass under pseudonyms over the question of the nature Christ assumed in the incarnation. In an editorial of the same issue, Spangler succinctly summarizes the previous two decades of debate resultant from the SDA-Evangelical conferences. He wrote:

Through the years this subject has been one of fervent discussion. The book Questions on Doctrine, published in 1957, startled the thinking of Adventist ministerial leadership, since numerous statements from Ellen White's pen were used to support the concepts that Christ had a sinless nature. M. L. Andreasen in a series of publications titled Letters to the Churches, took issue with the position of Questions on Doctrine. L. E. Froom's book Movement of Destiny, published in 1971, again emphasized the sinless human nature of Christ, based largely on Ellen White statements. In 1975, the book Perfection, published by the Southern Publishing Association, presented the views of four Adventist theologians on Christian perfection. The point was made that a person's soteriology is affected by his Christology. Eric Claude Webster in his published doctoral thesis, Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology, states, "The significance of this rift in Seventh-day Adventism is not insignificant." (p. 24)

One year later, in the same publication, Elder Thomas A. Davis presented his "alternate view" to the positions presented a year earlier. He wrote:

We read in Hebrews 2:17 that Jesus was "made like his brethren [the born-again, sanctified ones] in every respect." . . . In light of the foregoing we may conclude that there was something important about the incarnate nature of Christ that was like born-again people. I suggest that in this idea is a concept that could bring together the two viewpoints discussed in Ministry. (June, 1896, p. 14; emphasis his)

As he continues his presentation, Davis elaborates:

This brings me to my main emphasis. To develop my thesis, I stated, ... that "there was something important about the incarnate nature of Christ that was like born-again people." Now I give it the proper perspective by rewording it thus: There is something about born-again people that is like the incarnate Christ. This, I believe, is the better viewpoint, rather than the more common one - one that is sometimes given short shift - that Jesus was "born born-again." (It might be observed that the difference here is in perspective.) (ibid., p. 15)

Observe carefully, Davis indicates the difference is in "perspective" not substance.

Spangler had another dream. He envisioned a book which amplified each statement of belief which had been voted at the Dallas Session of the General Conference. His dream became a reality in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* This book gives what is called the "orthodox" view of the Incarnation as defined by Henry Melvill. Two paragraphs, and two footnotes demand careful reading. The first paragraph and footnote reads:

So that He could save those in the utter depths of degradation, Christ took a human nature that, compared to Adam's unfallen nature, had decreased in physical and mental strength - though He did so without sinning. (p. 47, emphasis supplied)

The footnote reads, in part, - "Christ took upon Him ... a human nature that had decreased in 'physical strength, in mental power, in moral worth' - though not morally depraved, but totally sinless." (p. 57; emphasis supplied)

If language means anything, this position states that Christ took upon Himself "a sinless human nature," not the fallen Adamic nature.

The second paragraph and note is as follows:

"Christ's humanity was not the Adamic humanity, that is, the humanity of Adam before the fall; nor fallen humanity, that is, in every respect the humanity of Adam after the fall. It was not the Adamic, because it had the innocent infirmities of the fallen. It was not the fallen, because it had never descended into moral impurity. It was, therefore, most literally our humanity, but without sin." (p. 47)

The footnote indicates that this is a direct quote from Henry Melvill, an Anglican clergyman. It is explained that "by 'innocent infirmities' he meant hunger, pain, sorrow, etc. He

called this view of the pre- and post-Fall nature of Christ, 'the orthodox doctrine.'" (p. 57, #13)

The position is again clearly indicated that Christ took the fallen physical nature of Adam, but had the unfallen moral nature of Adam. In a preceding section (5a, page 46), the book indicates that Christ "was made in the 'likeness of sinful flesh,' or 'sinful human nature,' or 'fallen human nature.'" To complicate this picture further, section 4 stated, "His human nature was created and did not possess superhuman powers." (p. 46) God created a "sinful human nature" that really was not sinful, but only had "innocent infirmities"? I will leave with the reader to put this all together. I cannot. What is even more amazing is that Dr. Ralph Larson who after his research published in the document, *The Word Made Flesh*, "bought" into this confusion. He wrote:

We pause to point out that the true doctrine of the nature of Christ is set forth in the new Seventh-day Adventists Believe, pp. 37-56. (The Tithe Problem, 32)

In 1991, in a supplement to the *Adventist Review* on "Tithe," Roger W. Coon, Associate Secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, wrote:

There are at least three views on the nature of Christ current in Adventist circles: (1) that at the incarnation Christ took the nature of Adam before Adam's fall; (2) that He took the nature of Adam after the fall; and (3) that He took a nature that in certain respects was like Adam's before the fall, but in other respects was like Adam's after the fall. (p. 3)

Currently, the renewed controversy is sparked by Dr. Woodrow Whidden of Andrews University, and will be further augmented in a forthcoming publication of Dr. Jean R. Zurcher's book, *Christ Manifest in the Flesh*, translated from the French edition. Whidden, in a paper presented at the Sanctuary Bible Conference, June 11, 1997 held at Berrien Springs, Michigan, listed the same three categories of current Adventist thinking as did Dr. Coon; however he gave a more detailed analysis.

The first category that Christ took Adam's unfallen nature, represented by the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, Whidden indicates "that no one (that I know) who is currently active in ministry and teaching hold to" it. He cites retired Robert Olson as one "who comes close to it." (p. 15) Borrowing from Zurcher, Whidden lists the post-Fall of Christ's human nature as "The Traditional or Historical" view. Then a third view is called - "The Alternate Christology" - which is defined as "the most recent and most widespread today. Presented by professor Heppenstall ...it was developed by the authors of the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. (Quoting Zurcher)

Whidden in his analysis suggests some sub-categories in these last two positions. He notes that many of those who hold to the post-fall nature of Christ's human nature accept the Thomas A. Davis "alternative" and adopt the teaching of

the Holy Flesh Movement that Christ came with a "born born-again" nature, or a "converted," "redeemed" human nature, which in Christ's case means a sinless human nature. Basically this is no different than the position set forth in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* Whidden lists among those holding this position as Sparks, the late Joe Crews, and Dennis Priebe. He might have added Colin and Russell Standish. No wonder Whidden confessed that "I want to simply throw up my hands and say, 'Ah, come on folks, we are really not all that far apart.'" (p. 15)

The compromises have simply brought us to a muddled confused state. How much more simple is it just to say - "God was manifest in the flesh;" "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" - knowing full well that the only flesh Mary could give to Jesus was the flesh of fallen humanity. Anything apart from this is only degrees removed from the Roman doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Well may those who are seeking to resurrect the teaching of the men involved in the Holy Flesh Movement, as well as those who subscribe to the Melvill "orthodox" teaching, ponder the counsel given by Dr. E. J. Waggoner the evening before the demise of the Holy Flesh Movement. He said:

We need to settle it, every one of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not. There are a great many that have got the marks yet. ...

Do you not see that the idea that the flesh of Jesus was not like ours (because 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, ... is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh. (1901 GC Bulletin, p. 404)

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