

*"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 (Moffat)



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During the year 1995, we focused our emphasis in the issues of WWN on Revelation, and current events in the Religious world assessing the aims of the Papacy as given in the recent Encyclicals of John Paul II. This was not saying that events of interest were not taking place within the Community of Adventism. They were. The General Conference of the regular Church met in Utrecht of the Netherlands; certain of the "major" independents continued to talk out of both sides of their mouths, while others splintered with major internal problems as well as moral issues surfacing. Theologically, a section of the independent ministries have made the doctrine of the Trinity their main thrust. Certain of these events and theologies, we plan to comment upon in this issue. Others involving morals and misuse of funds, we shall let rest, hoping and praying that sincerely concerned Adventists will not only free themselves from their involvement with these "voices" but also with the so-called caretaker groups that have involved themselves in the picture.

Another interesting phenomenon is observable. When individuals, who have joined an independent ministry from some secular vocation, are either fired, or leave because of internal problems, they in turn begin another "independent" ministry. Instead of returning to their vocation and taking time to honestly assess the experience through which they have passed and their own hearts, to find out what the problems and issues really were, they become another "voice" with no message. Perhaps their ego will not permit them to take up their vocation again, or they discovered from their mentors how easy it was to write a letter and beg for money. Tragic! Yet more tragically, there are still those concerned Adventists who will respond. May God have mercy on those "sheep" who are being sheared by such "voices."

In this issue we shall begin with the rebellion of the Sligo Church against the action of the General Conference in session. We shall review again the doctrine of the Trinity and aspects of the teachings of those who are making it their mainstay.

REBELLION ON THE Sligo

The New York Times (September 23, 1995, p. 11) carried a feature article by Gustav Niebuhr captioned - "An Adventist Church Breaks Ranks." Evidently syndicated, the same article appeared in other papers across the nation, as I received a copy of the identical article from the West Coast. That Sabbath, the Sligo Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, the second largest congregation in the North American Division, ordained to the gospel ministry three women in defiance of a vote taken at the General Conference session held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in July, which denied the North American Division their request to act separately on this issue from the position of the world-wide Church.

This act of rebellion involves more than merely ordaining three women to the ministry of the Church. 1) It challenges the position held by the Church on the authority of the General Conference when it speaks in Session with representatives present from all parts of the world field. 2) This leads directly to another challenge. The prophetic role of Ellen G. White who enunciated the authority of the voice of the General Conference in Church affairs. 3) It challenges the authority of the local conference Committee under whose jurisdiction the pastor of the Sligo Church functions. The Union Conference is also involved inasmuch as one of the women ordained is a member of the Columbian Union College staff. The president of the College is directly answerable to the Union Committee. However, I am informed that both the pastor of the Sligo Church and the President of the College are members of the Potomac (local) Conference Committee. It is this committee which issues the credentials which would recognize the ordination to be what the Sligo Church wanted it to be; otherwise, the ordination service on September 23, 1995 was nothing more than the service performed by any Church in ordaining local elders.

Anyone knowing just the elementary functioning of the Church organization can readily recognize that this act of the Sligo Church presented the hierarchy of the Church with a monumental problem. Add to this the politics involved and you have all the ingredients of a atomic magnitude explosion. If the responsible parties are not disciplined, the very authority of the General Conference is muted. However, the power and financial contribution of the Sligo

Church is a factor which hierarchical "politicians" will cringe before. It is doubtful that a single officer from the Potomac Conference through the Columbian Union Conference and the North American Division to the General Conference has the character or moral courage to take the action which this rebellion demands.

It is plainly stated in Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, p. 260:

"Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work, and to say what plans should be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered."

Further in the same Testimony, it is declared - "God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the world, shall have authority." (p. 261)

At the General Conference session at Utrecht in July, the delegates rejected the request of the North American Division to ordain women to the Ministry by a two to one margin. The question now is simply, does the General Conference in session have authority or not? If it does, what discipline is to be meted out to Sligo? If however, the Church is in the state of apostasy which many of the "independent" ministries assert she is, then the "voice" of the General Conference has no significance nor authority. Is this what Sligo is saying? The Church is in apostasy; it is time to set up a new organization.

This problem generated by Sligo cannot be properly addressed without invoking the whole question of ordination of woman to the Gospel Ministry. The precedent of Scripture is clear and simple. In the Old Testament, the priesthood were males from the House of Aaron. There were prophetesses who spoke for God, but these were called of God, and never functioned in the services of the temple or synagogue. In the New Testament, Christ chose and ordained twelve men, even though there were women in His entourage. See Luke 8:1-3. History tells us that it was the pagan religions who had priestesses.

Furthermore, the Bible sets up one criterion by which one qualifies for ministry, and thus ordination. Paul charged Timothy in his final

epistle - "Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (II Tim. 4:5) This is not saying that only those who have been given the "gift" of evangelism, should be ordained, but that all professing to have one of the gifts - apostles, prophets, evangelists, or pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11) - make full proof of his ministry by doing "the work of an evangelist" - soul winning - before being ordained.

Without knowing the women ordained by the Sligo Park Church, I dare say that not one of them has given a series of Bible studies to an individual desiring to find the truth as it is in Jesus, let alone hold public evangelistic meetings. Over the years, I can recall only reports from Finland where women were actively engaged in public evangelism. Yet here in America at certain centers of Adventism we hear the hue and cry for ordination of women.

My mother and I were introduced to the Three Angel's message by a retired Bible Worker. She and her minister husband had chosen to retire from their responsibilities in Michigan to my home town in Boone, Iowa. It was not until ten years ago, that I learned that she had carried a Ministerial License. She never spoke about it nor used it to promote herself. At that time, there was no church in Boone, and a small group met from Sabbath to Sabbath in the home of this retired couple. On various Sabbaths, Bertha E. Jorgensen, would give a Bible Study during the hour of worship. We were her last converts, but to the very end, she endeavored to do the work of an evangelist.

In the years that followed, her husband, Elder Nels M. Jorgensen, died, and the Church at Boone was left without male leadership. Among the group was a teacher on the local High School staff, and she was elected as Church Leader, not a local elder, and nothing was even suggested about her being ordained. It was service, not recognition, prestige and power, to which these of the past responded.

On the same list in 1985 (Spectrum, Vol. 16, #3, p. 60) from which I learned that Sister Jorgensen had carried a Ministerial License, I noted also that Mary E. Walsh, author of The Wine of Roman Babylon, was so recognized. During my ministry, when pastor of the First Church in Toronto, Canada, Sister Walsh was in the area. I asked her to speak at our Worship Hour. We were greatly blessed by her ministry. Over the years she had done the work of an evangelist, and had given full proof of her ministry, yet I never knew her to lobby for ordination.

The present problem which the Church leadership faces today is of their own making. Instead of holding to the guidelines set by the Apostle Paul - "do the work of an evangelist" - the Church began to ordain Conference Treasurers, Auditors, and Academy and College administrators. One of the best conference treasurers that I knew during my ministry in the Church was O. J. Bell who served the Texico Conference when its headquarters were in Clovis, New Mexico. I was assigned the Clovis District with four churches and two Sabbath schools to minister. I never had to worry about the Clovis Church as Brother Bell pastored it besides his Conference responsibilities, and he did so not as an ordained minister.

In the report from the New York Times, one of the North American church leaders defined the ordination issue as based in "social justice." He might have been more accurate had he admitted it was "social pressure" because of what other religious bodies are doing rather than based on what the Bible actually indicates. If the Church leaders really wanted to solve the problem from a Biblical point of view, they should take a page from how the Apostles solved a discriminatory problem in the early days of the Christian Church.

When a problem arose in the central Church in Jerusalem - a problem involving women - over "the daily ministration" being given widows, both Hebrew and Grecian, the Apostles formed a new order of "clergy" - the Deaconate. They were ordained. (Acts. 6:6) They did evangelism. Stephen, one of the "Deaconate," was the first recorded Christian martyr. They baptized. Philip, one of the seven, baptized the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38). What other ministerial services these performed are not given because nowhere in the New Testament are we told of a marriage service performed, nor a funeral conducted. There would be nothing amiss, if every ministerial intern were first ordained into a new order of clergy as a Deacon.

This also provides a possibility for a women ministry as Deaconesses. Counsel has been given which reads:

"Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. **They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands.** In some cases they will need to counsel with church officers or the minister but if they are devoted women,

maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church." ("The Duty of the Minister and the People," a signed EGW Manuscript in the Andriessen Collection; emphasis supplied)

This work of an ordained deaconess is the highest suggested level for ordained women ministry to my knowledge. The criteria for service set forth under the above guidelines would soon determine whether the women now seeking ordination are really wanting to serve, or are merely wanting to satisfy their ego. I am sure that the present trend of rebellion will continue unless the whole structure of ministerial ordination is realigned with the Scripture guidelines, and the mandate of Paul is implemented starting with the internship period. The establishment of a new "order" of clergy as did the Apostolic Church would go far to remedy the problem.

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FACTORS of THE GODHEAD

During this year, among the "independent" voices in the community of Adventism, there has been a constant discussion of the subject of the Trinity. These "voices" have sought to draw a distinct line between their perceptions and the teachings of the regular Church. There is no question but that the Church in 1980 at the Dallas session wrote into the new Statement of Beliefs, the doctrine of the Trinity as taught in the Nicene Creed. This brought the Church into line with the credal formula which forms the basis of the World Council of Churches, as well as alignment with Roman Catholic teaching. However, to be merely against some particular apostate position does not mean that one is holding to the truth as it is revealed in the Bible. We need to start with the Word of God, and then let that revelation reveal its own contrast with error, instead of defining the error, and taking a position in contradistinction to error which may or may not be truth.

The Gospel of John in its preface declares plainly that "in beginning" there "was" the Logos, and this Logos "was in the beginning with God." (John 1:1-2) [The Greek verb translated, "was," is in the imperfect tense and indicates continuous action in past time] In the fulness of time this Logos became flesh and tabernacled among men. (John 1:14) John does not tell by what means

this took place. Two of the other Gospels indicate that it was the Holy Spirit who "fathered" Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35) Since this is the statement of the Word of God, it means simply that the Holy Spirit pre-existed Bethlehem. This is factor Number One which must be computerized into any formulation of the doctrine of the Godhead.

The "how" of this unique conception is not given. It remains a mystery in the fullest sense of the meaning of that word, yet we are told that "God was manifest in the flesh." (I Tim. 3:16) While the "how" is not described, it is nevertheless evident that He was not "conceived" as the father of the human race was, by Divine Fiat, when "by the breath His mouth... [God] spake and it was; He commanded and it stood fast." (Ps. 33:6, 9) The Logos, who was made flesh, had been in the beginning with God. He did not begin at Bethlehem. Yet at Bethlehem a unique Person did begin, never before known in the Universe, a God-man. This God-man, this distinct and new Person, after His sacrificial death was "highly exalted... and given... a name which is above every name." (Phil 2:9) This is factor Number Two which must be computerized into any formulation of the doctrine of the Godhead.

This God-man as the Son of man declared Himself to be the "I am." (John 8:58) This in simplest terms means that He was Self-existent - I am - and Ever-existent - I AM! This is factor Number Three which must be computerized into any formulation of the doctrine of the Godhead.

John in his Gospel introduces the Holy Spirit, in His relationship to the Logos made flesh, during the Upper Room dialogue prior to Gethsemane. John quotes Jesus' promise - "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." (14:16) Yet in the next few sentences, Jesus declares - "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." (14:18) The word translated, "another," in verse 16 is the Greek word, *allos*, which means, equal to, but distinct from. Thus the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, and the Logos made flesh are equal to each other, but distinct from each other. This is factor Number Four which must be computerized into any formulation of the doctrine of the Godhead.

It should be evident by now that there is no easy nor quick formulation of the doctrine of God. While the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated by the Roman Catholic Church finds

its roots in Paganism as prophecy indicated it would, nevertheless those "voices," in the Community of Adventism, which seek to make Christ a lesser Being than the Eternal One, and who seek to relegate the Holy Spirit into the ethereal, need to pause and consider carefully these factors based in Scripture before literally "running off at the mouth."

No doubt I will be faulted for not putting together into a concise formulation these four factors as I perceive them, but to do so without you, the reader, doing some serious thinking for yourself would violate the highest objective of teaching - "to train [individuals] to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought." (Education, p. 17)

During the past year, we here on the campus, and the Nora Springs Adventist Church have been wrestling with a position paper on the Godhead. Two young men of the Nora Springs Church, Gary Patrick and Dennis Tevis, have worked untiringly on this paper, both in research and formulation. They have prepared a tentative release which is available, on one condition - He who writes for a free copy, by so doing, accepts the obligation to critically evaluate the same and return his comments, questions and suggestions to these young men whose address will be included with the paper. From this input, we hope to have a position paper as close to truth as it is possible to formulate on the relationship of the Godhead. In so doing we recognize that there are mysteries which must await the Class Room in Eternity when the Master Teacher will reveal the full meaning and significance of all the factors of Redemption.

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"Satan has long been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world. ... He has not yet reached the full accomplishment of his designs; but it will be reached in the last remnant of time. Says the prophet: 'I saw three unclean spirits like frogs; ... they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.' (Rev. 16:13-14) Except those who are kept by the power of God, through faith in His word, the whole world will be swept into the ranks of this delusion. The people are fast being lulled to a fatal security, to be awakened only by the outpouring of the wrath of God."

Great Controversy, pp. 561-562

ARMAGEDDON

Several months ago, my attention was called to a manuscript which had been released in 1993 on the subject of Armageddon. The informant indicated that it was advertized as an answer to the application of Luke 21:24 to current events in the recent history of the State of Israel. I secured a copy, and with each successive issue of WWN hoped to find space to discuss some of the contents of the manuscript. Now in this special issue, I shall do so.

Skipping over the first six chapters, I found in Chapter 7, a definition of terms as viewed by the writers. They used Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with its abbreviated Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek Lexicon to obtain a definition of the word, megiddon. No serious scholar of the Word of God would attempt to build a definition of a transliterated word from Hebrew to the Greek to the English on such an abbreviated source. Interestingly, with the authors' limited resources for such research, they did follow through on the English word, "rendezvous," given by Strong, finding that the Hebrew word could mean, "A place appointed for a meeting." However, they failed to connect this concept with the fact, which they noted, that the text in Revelation uses a compound word, Har-Magedon - "Har" - meaning mountain. If they had done so, they would have discovered the very Hebrew word in Isa. 14:13, translated, "the mount of the congregaton," or Jerusalem.

The authors of this manuscript, then turn their attention to the term, "place" - "a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." The word place is topos in the Greek. It can be used in a literal sense as in John 14:3, where Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you." Or, it can be used as in Hebrews 12:17, where speaking of Esau, "he found no place of repentance," no way to change his mind; he had passed the point of no return. Which concept does the word, "place," convey in Rev. 16:16? Is it not a literal place to which when gathered, the "kings of the earth" pass a point of no return. The authors of the manuscript introduce various quotations from The Great Controversy. I suggest that pp. 561-562, where Rev. 16:13-14 is quoted, and TM, p. 62 be computerized into their thinking. See column one.

Basically, the real issue is how shall we interpret the Word of God? The concepts put forth by

the authors of Armageddon run contrary to the principles of Biblical interpretation in the Advent Movement. Don F. Neufeld, in an essay in A Symposium of Biblical Hermeneutics, edited by Gordon M. Hyde, gave seven principles which governed Adventist thinking. Number 6 reads:

"The Bible must be interpreted according to the plain, obvious, and literal import unless a figure is employed." (p. 119)

Neufeld indicated that "this was a recurring theme at a time when critics attempted to demolish the positions taken by the Adventists." He cites articles in the early issues of the Review & Herald (1854, 1855, and 1859) written by Smith, Andrews, and an experience and conclusion of D. P. Hall. Hall had confronted "a minister of one of the popular denominations, who denied the literality and tangibility of everything taught in the Bible." He wrote, "But there is a remedy for all of this jargon and confusion, and it is to be found in the use of the literal principles of interpretation. Interpret the language of the sacred writers as you do the language of all others, and this difficulty would be speedily obviated." (R&H, August 29, 1854)

The authors of Armageddon, in seeking to demolish the position taken by an Adventist editor at the 1952 Bible Conference, by Dr. J. R. Zurcher, in his book, Christ of the Revelation, and as taught in the 20th Century Bible Course, Lesson 5, have in the first six chapters of their manuscript attempted to spiritualize away Luke 21:24. They define Jerusalem as "God's people." (p. 14) Now "Jerusalem" of verse 24 is the same "Jerusalem" of verse 20. In the verses between, Jesus nowhere tells the disciples, "Now I am talking about a different 'Jerusalem' when I say the city is to be trodden down of the Gentiles." The same city which was to be "compassed with armies" was the same city to "be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." What if the Christians in Jerusalem had in 66 A.D. spiritualized away verse 20, as the authors of Armageddon do verse 24? To spiritualize away the words of Jesus is deceptive and diabolical.

A comparison is made between Luke 21:24 and Rev. 11:2, equating both "Jerusalem" and "the holy city" as God's people. (ibid.) It is true that certain terminologies are found in both texts, such as, "Gentiles" (or "nations;" same word in the Greek) and "tread under foot." However, in Rev. 11:2, "the times of the Gentiles fulfilled," nor "Jerusalem" is not found. Rev. 11:2 merely states that "the holy city" would be

trodden "under foot" during the time of the first beast of Revelation 13. (See v. 5) **The** holy city - and the article is used - denoted a specific city, and that city is the New Jerusalem. John clearly wrote, "I John saw **the** holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." (21:2) Now is "God's people" coming down from God out of heaven, or is it a literal city which is called "the camp of the saints" not the "saints"? (20:9) Revelation 11:1-2 is a symbolic representation of what the Gentiles (nations) did to those who constituted the worshipers described by Paul in Hebrews 12:22-24. It is the court that is without the temple which is given to the Gentiles, while "the holy city," and what it stands for, is trodden down during the 1260 years of papal rule. The real temple of "the holy city" is "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb." (Rev. 22:22) But another during the 1260 prophetic days set himself up "in the temple of God" as God. (II Thess. 2:4)

The "Jerusalem" of Luke 21:24 is the literal city, no longer holy, its temple desolate. (Matt. 24:38) Zurcher stated well the relationship between Luke 21 verses 20 and 24. He wrote - "Jerusalem is both the beginning and the culmination of Jesus' prophecy." (Christ of the Revelation, p. 71) Then he concluded his discussion of Luke 21:24 by stating:

"Jerusalem here [in verse 24] constitutes the last sign by which the Lord shows us that the history of this world is coming to its climax, and that the restoration of all things is at hand." (p. 72)

The Christians residing in Jerusalem in 66 A.D. believed the words of Jesus, accepted them as they were literally spoken, and by doing so were saved, escaping the destruction of Jerusalem which followed in 70 A.D. Such an attitude marks the genuine Christian separating him from those who profess Christianity, but who spiritualize away the very words of Jesus so as to avoid the consequences of what He stated. Salvation is believing and accepting the words of Jesus as written.

Perhaps the authors of Armageddon, will try to find a way to spiritualize away the promise of Jesus, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment." (John 5:24, Gr.) There is a spiritual blessing in heeding the promise of Jesus, but you do not spiritualize away the promise. Just so, there is the prophecy of Jesus in Luke 21:24, but you dare not spiritualize away its import with impunity.

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the days of Amos the prophet, there were those in Israel, who because of the blessings promised under their covenant relationship with God, desired the coming of "the day of the Lord" so that they might be delivered from the hand of the oppressor. However, because they continued in a life of sin, the coming of "the day of the Lord" would be only darkness for them. Then Amos used an illustration which I wish to borrow for another purpose. Amos said the situation in Israel was as "if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him." (Amos 5:19).

There is and has been for several decades in the Community of Adventism, those who recognize that "the mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith" and that "upon [that doctrine] are based all the other teachings of the [Roman] Church." (Handbook for Today's Catholic, p. 11) As a result these have become avid anti-Trinitarians, advocating among other things that the pre-existent Christ, the Logos, was a lesser Being than God, having been generated, or begotten by, or emanated from Him.

This position reflects the teachings of Gnosticism. This system starts from the concept of an absolute primal being, "without beginning, unnameable, and incomprehensible; on the one hand, infinitely exalted above every existence; yet on the other hand, the original aeon, the sum of all ideas and spiritual powers." Then this primal God sent "forth from His bosom several aeons." These "emanate from the absolute," and Christ is considered "the chief of the aeons." (History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff, pp. 452-453)

Now what is Gnosticism? Schaff defines it as "a heretical philosophy of religion, or, more exactly, a mythological theosophy, which reflects intellectually the peculiar, fermenting state of that remarkable age of transition from the heathen to the Christian order of things." In form and method it was more Oriental than Grecian. (ibid, pp. 449-450)

What has happened in this attempt of one segment of the Community of Adventism to distance themselves from the pagan-papal Trinitarian concepts? They have in turn adopted the basics of Gnosticism and interpret the Scriptures accordingly. Thus "fleeing from the

lion, a bear met" them. There is nothing wrong in being against error. That is the correct thing to be. It is how we relate to the error that is the issue. To merely put distance between one's self and the error is not necessarily the answer. We may meet "a bear." We need to reconglize that the track of error lies close beside the track or truth. The answer is not distance but perception which means that a mind worked by the Holy Spirit is the requisite.

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NOTE - There will be no January, 1996 issue of "Watchman, What of the Night?" However, in its place you will receive a 16 page booklet: The SIGN of the End of Time. With that mailing there will be a cover letter telling you the "why" of the publication and how you may wish to use it. This will be placed in the mails just before Christmas, so be looking for it.

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"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:34-36)

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"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854, USA.

In Canada, write - The Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Canada, P. O. Box 117, Thorne, ON P0H 2J0.

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