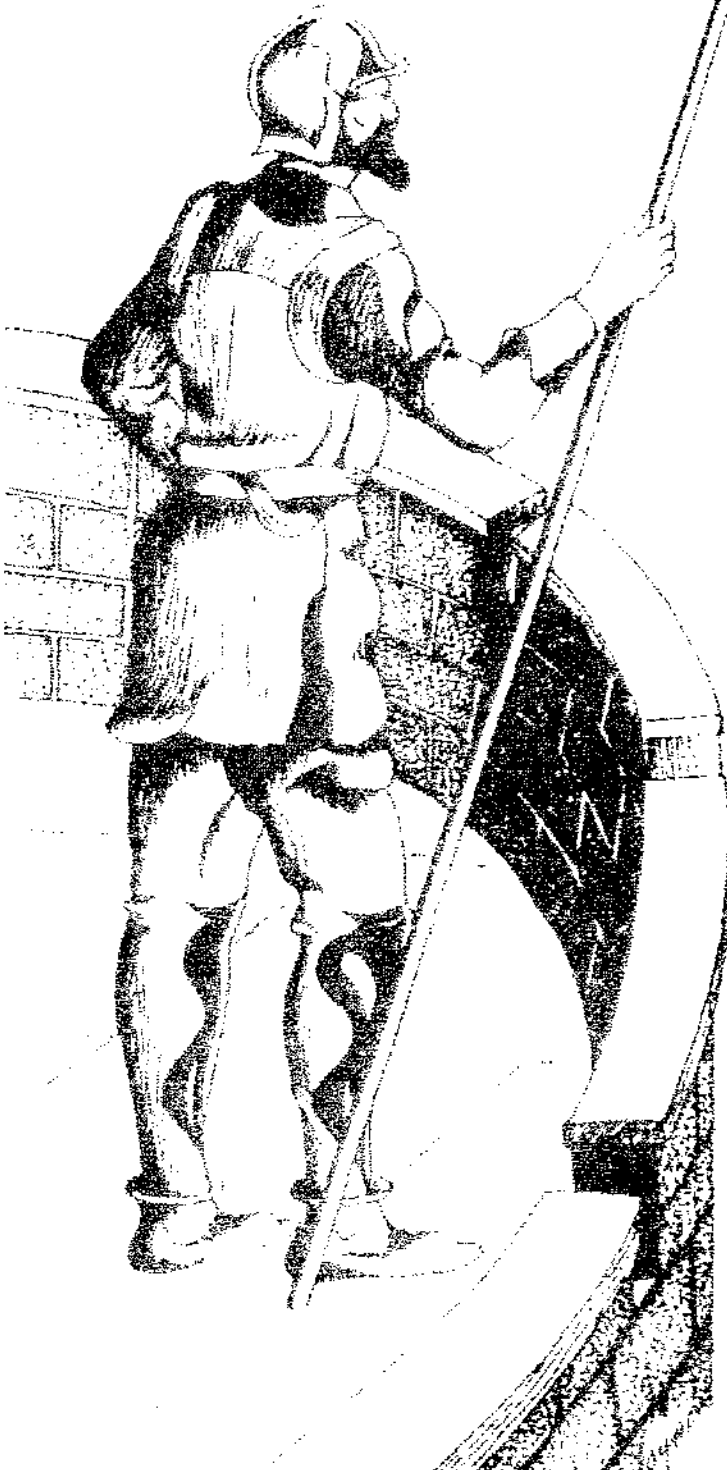


“*Watchman,
what of the night?*”

*‘The hour has come, the hour is striking and striking at you,
the hour and the end!’* Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



The Incarnation Revisited

Editor's Preface

The objective of each issue of "watchman, what of the night?" is to stimulate in-depth thought on a Biblical topic or doctrine. True, we challenge positions which we believe to be wrong and contrary to the historic teachings of the Church. In the current issue will be found certain concepts which we hope will stimulate some thinking in regard to the Incarnation as related to the subject of the Godhead. We are aware of the position of the Church as well as statements in the Writings which suggest a Tri-theistic position. Concepts stated in Genesis and Revelation and in the Shema of Israel, with connecting verses from Isaiah and Zechariah as well as Luke and Paul's view of the Incarnation, call for more study and thought about God as a Duality. We are then left with "the Spirit and the bride" (Rev. 22:17) to factor into the picture. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness" (I Tim. 3:16) (Another 3:16 verse to study thoughtfully with John 3:16).

The Incarnation "Revisited"

The doctrine of the Incarnation was one of the key doctrines discussed and compromised at the Seventh-day Adventist-Evangelical Conferences held during 1955-1956. Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, the key *Evangelical conferee*, wrote at the conclusion of the meetings in *Eternity* magazine of which he was editor, that the majority Adventist position on the nature of Christ "while in the flesh" has always been held "to be sinless, holy, and perfect despite the fact that certain of their writers have occasionally gotten into print with contrary views completely repugnant to the Church at large. They further explained to Mr. Martin that they had among their number certain members of their 'lunatic fringe' even as there are similar wild-eyed irresponsibles in every field of fundamental Christianity" (p. 6, September 1956).

However, in regard to the doctrine of the Incarnation the change in thinking cannot be charged solely to the conferences, but was already beginning to appear in church publications in the prior decade.

From emphasized in Movement of the Destiny that --

Cognizance must also be taken of the correction, in 1949, of a definite error appearing in a note on the nature of Christ during the Incarnation. For years it had appeared, unchallenged, in the standard Bible Readings for the Home Circle. It was in the section on "A Sinless Life." Apparently it was first written by W.A. Colcord, in 1914. It likewise involved one of those questions upon which there had been variance of view through the years. Colcord had declared that during his incarnate earthly life Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature" (p.174). ...

In 1949, Prof. D. E. Rebok, then president of our Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, when it was still in Washington D.C. was requested by the Review and Herald to revise Bible Readings for the Home Circle. Coming upon the unfortunate note on page 174, in the study of the "Sinless Life," he recognized that this was not true, but in eliminating the note he found that some still held with Colcord in his position (pp. 427-428).

And the reason is a matter of record: In 1932, Francis D. Nichol, then the associate editor of the Review and Herald wrote a book, *Answers to Objections*, in which he discussed various objections to the teachings of Adventist belief, but nothing in this first edition discussed the Incarnation. In 1952, within the shadows of the Conferences of 1955-1956, the book, *Answers to Objections*, was revised with a foreword by W. H. Branson, then president of the General Conference. Section V: Sanctuary and Atonement, was enlarged to include a detailed discussion of the Incarnation under "Objection 94." Nichol quoted from p. 49 of *The Desire of Ages* and wrote:

This is Adventist belief. And we hold this belief because it agrees with revelation and reason. Note the following:

He cited certain references from the Pauline Epistles - Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14-7 - and made comment. (These references we will note later). He then wrote that "in holding this view of Christ" (coming in the likeness of sinful flesh) "Seventh-day Adventist agree essentially with the view expressed by various devout theologians through the years." Nichol quoted a number of them (pp. 394-396). He closed his discussion of the Incarnation with a note addressed to Adventist writers and speakers, which was passed unheeded by the Adventist conferees as well as others since. Observe it carefully:

A word of counsel to some of our Adventist writers and speakers may be in order here. The incarnation is very great mystery. We shall

never fully understand how a Being could at once be both "Son of God" and "Son of Man," thus possessing both a human and a divine nature. Likewise, the presence of sin in the universe is a very great mystery. We shall probably never understand fully the nature of sin, and hence probably never understand fully the meaning of the term "sinful flesh" which we and others often use without attempting to define it. When we speak of the taint of sin, the germs of sin we should remember that we are using metaphorical language. Critics, especially who see the Scriptures through Calvinistic eyes, read into the term "sinful flesh" something that Adventist theology does not require. Thus if we use the term "sinful flesh" in regard to Christ's human nature as some of our writers have done, we lay ourselves open to misunderstanding. True, we mean by that term simply that Christ "took on him the seed of Abraham," and was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but critics are not willing to believe this.

Let us never forget that a Scriptural mystery is always most safely stated in the language of Scripture. Hence, when we must move amid the mists of divine mystery we do well to stay within the protecting bounds of quotation marks. We need not move beyond in order to secure from that mystery its saving, sanctifying power. And staying thus within those bounds, we best protect the mystery from the ridicule of skeptics, the Adventist name from the attacks of critics and ourselves from being lost in the mist (p. 397).

As Nichol observes, the issue of the incarnation involves Calvinism. In the 1955-1956 Conferences, the Adventist conferees were facing men who saw "the Scriptures through Calvinistic eyes." What then was the real motive of the Adventist Conferees in seeking to harmonize Adventist teaching with that of the Evangelicals? Acceptance by men? And this regardless of the truth committed to our trust? Had we forgotten that "we have a truth that admits of no compromise? Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth?" (Special Testimonies, #7, p.40). This does not suggest two poles to truth, and viewing error in as favorable a light as possible! In "revisiting" the conferences, and their fruitage, QOD, Leroy Moore

introduces his personal conception of the Incarnation which places the doctrine of the incarnation once again on the "front burner" of the agitation within Adventism. One is handicapped in analyzing Moore's current book as it does not have an index and introduces concepts as controversial as any introduced in the original edition of QOD, such as, "two poles of truth" for each major doctrine discussed. He sets forth what he calls "paradoxical principles," which "cure both compromise and a judgmental spirit" (p.37), yet throughout the book, there are continual and vicious attacks on Andreasen. Two of those who place their "imprimatur" on Moore's current book (back cover eulogy) co-authored with John Reeve, a third Andrews University professor a book on the Trinity. Paul and Luke, companions in travel, define the birth of Christ differently. No doubt, Moore would use this difference in language as evidence of "poles of truth" instead of nothing what Gabriel revealed about God. Luke reported that the angel Gabriel told Mary (perhaps from a personal interview with her) "the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee" (1:35), while Paul states that Christ "emptied Himself" (Phil 2:7, ARV).

First, we shall observe Moore's position on the Incarnation, with comment, then focus on the New Testament, observing mostly Pauline references before commenting on the Godhead insight suggested in the difference of statements by Luke and Paul.

Moore, in defining his position on the Incarnation wrote:

Thankfully, an increasing number now emphasize a sinless spiritual human nature from his incarnate birth, such as is true of no other human, and a sinful biological inheritance (pp. 208-209).

This is saying either that Jesus Christ in His humanity had a dual human nature, one sinless and the other sinful; or that He looked like a man - "in the likeness of men" [Phil 2:7], yet had in essence the nature of Adam before the Fall.

In "revisiting" the Incarnation it seems that in our past discussion of the doctrine we have overlooked a factor suggested in the Writings:

There is light and glory in the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundations of the world were laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible (Review, April 5, 1906).

Factored into the incarnation, it means simply that as a pre-existent Being, Jesus Christ entered humanity--"Son of God" and "Son of Man"--both of which He was not, except by decree [Ps.2:7] and a mysterious human generation. He came as a babe without a human father but from a daughter of Eve, the first to sin.

The preface to John's Gospel emphasized the great mystery of Godliness --"God was manifest in the flesh" [I Tim. 3:16]. "In (the) beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and Divine was the Word. The same was in beginning with God. All things through him came into being... and the Word flesh became and tabernacled among us" [1:1-3, 14 lit.].

We need to pause and consider the concepts stated in these verses: 1) He who became Jesus Christ was with God from the very beginning -- "the same was in beginning with God." In writing this, John chose the Greek imperfect of the verb, "to be" (ην - was) which denotes continuous action in past time. 2) All things came into existence

thorough Him and apart from Him nothing came to be. Does this include the incarnation? Paul wrote that in the incarnation, He "emptied Himself" (Phil. 2:7 RSV). 3) He ceased to be in the "form" of God - "spirit" (John 4:24), and came to be in the "form" of man -"flesh" (John 1:14). Other references of the New Testament emphasize the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the nature of the "flesh" He assumed in becoming man.

Paul declared plainly that He who existed "in the form of God, counted not being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped" but "took upon him the form of a slave (δουλος)" [Phil.2:6-7]. Here it is clearly stated what Jesus assumed, but did not become. He took upon himself the "flesh of sin" (σαρκος 'αμαρτιας). He did not sin in that flesh, rather He condemned sin in that flesh [Rom. 8:3].

The word translated "form" (μορφη) "always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it." (See The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament by Moulton & Milligan, art. morphe'.) In the same scripture (verse 8) "in fashion (σχημα) as a man" is the contrasting Greek word, "schema," denoting the external appearance.

Paul was equally as clear as to the nature of the flesh of sin the Word took. He wrote that the "gospel of God" concerned "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3).

As Paul continues to discuss "the gospel of God" concerning Jesus Christ committed to his trust, he reiterates the humanity assumed, and the glory that was His by divine right. In Romans 8:3, he declared that God sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin

(Greek), not "sinful flesh." It could sin, there were risks. It had sinned in Adam, but in Christ Jesus, the second Adam that which had sinned and was weakened by four thousand years of sin, sinned not!

In Romans 9, Paul speaks of his own ancestral inheritance, the Israelites, the fathers, by whom "as concerning the flesh Christ come, who is overall, God, blessed forever". One has only to observe the genealogical record found in both Luke and Matthew to understand "the flesh" of the "fathers" He accepted upon Himself from the womb of Mary. Yet He was and is God over all, blessed forever. That transition from the form of God to the form of a slave which we designate the Incarnation remains an unexplainable mystery to the human mind.

The other reference cited was Hebrews 2:14-17. It reads:

For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same... he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.

There have been and are those in Adventism who interpret those verses as teaching that Christ took a sanctified human nature (verse 11) in assuming humanity. Such was the thinking of those who led the "Holy Flesh" movement in Indiana at the turn of the last century. This teaching appeared again following the SDA-Evangelical conferences as an alternate position to the two concepts in conflict: Whether Christ took the pre-Fall or Post-Fall nature of Adam. Thomas A. Davis advocated it in his book, *Was Jesus Really Like Us?* (ch.3) Ron Spear likewise took the same position in his booklet, *Waymarks of Adventism* (p. 39). It was worded that Christ came "born, born-again." Now in this current

revisit by Moore, both he and one who placed his approval on the back cover, Dr. Woodrow Whidden, want to get away from the pre-fall and post-fall terms. This is understandable. The two terms are not different poles of truth. They are antagonistic each to the other. QOD holds to the pre-fall, while Andreasen maintained the historic post-fall position of Adventism. Moore devoted Appendix C to the question, asking "Can we get away from pre-and post - fall terms?"

The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is noted in the original QOD, but there is little questioning by the Evangelicals. One question was asked - "Do you believe in the Trinity?" - and the Adventists responded by presenting the 1931 statement which had been placed in the Church's Yearbook. It read:

That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the eternal Father, a personal, spiritual being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption.

Dr. Moore in revisiting QOD emphasizes the Trinity in relationship to the Atonement. The Section is captioned:

Godhead = Key to Three-Fold Atonement

The first paragraph reads:

The three persons of the godhead illustrate how a full and complete atonement on the cross can be followed by yet another full and complete atonement in the heavenly sanctuary. God is one yet the one god exists in three whole and complete persons whose united suffering is visualized in the one who hung on the cross. Only hours before surrendering himself to the mob, Jesus informed Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He could also have

said, "He that hath seen me that seen the Spirit." For as One the Three eternally unite in every endeavor -- including all three phases of a single, multi-faceted, eternal atonement (p. 154).

Between the first publication of QOD, in 1957 and the current "revisit" by Dr. Moore, there has been much agitation concerning the doctrine of the trinity by several independent ministries. A revisit of key scriptural references pertaining to the godhead seems to be in order now that Dr. Moore has connected the trinity to the atonement, and two who placed their imprimatur on his book have themselves with a third professor at Andrews University published a book, The Trinity.

First, let us observe what conclusion can be drawn by placing side by side Paul and Luke's understanding of the Incarnation. Luke quotes Gabriel as telling Mary that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her, but Paul declared that Jesus Christ emptied himself in accepting the form of a servant. Jesus Christ who declared himself to be the truth said that he would pray the Father to give them another Comforter even the Spirit of truth and that in so doing he would not leave them "comfortless," but rather He would fulfill his promise, "I will come to you." This revelation of God is in the gospel whose introductory format parallels Genesis. Genesis 1:1 reads-- "In beginning Gods created the heaven and the earth."

This is further emphasized in their stated objective - "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." The question to be asked is - What is the image that God created? Was one of the Elohim, female? No. the emphasis in the creation of Eve for Adam is that they shall be one flesh. This oneness in duality is the whole theme of Genesis 1-

Elohim, (plural subject) bara (singular verb). It is the image seen in the creation of man. "They (two) shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

This perception of God is the same as is expressed in the shema of Israel- "Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy Gods in one Lord." In the text the word which I have translated "Gods" (אלהים) is plural, not singular. (See *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* by B. Davidson. He grammatically analyzed it as a masculine plural noun with a plural suffix.

This duality is also found in Isaiah 44:6. The Verse reads:

Thus saith the Lord the king of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me (us) there is (are) no Gods (Elohim).

The Duality emphasis is carried over into the last book of the Bible:

Rev. 1:8- "I am alpha (first) and omega (last), the beginning and the ending, saith the lord, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty.

Rev. 1:10-17- I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, The first and the last; and I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the mist of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me. I am he that liveth, and was dead. And behold I am alive forevermore, Amen.

Revelation 22:12-13 - Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

One other text in the Old Testament emphasizes the duality of the godhead - Zech. 6: 12-13:

Thus speaketh the lord of hosts, saying, behold the man whose name is the BRANCH, and he shall grow up out of his place (John 1:46) and he shall build the temple of the Lord (John 2:19). Even he shall build the temple of the lord. And he bear his glory (John 1:14). And shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne (Heb. 5:6): and the counsel of peace shall be between the two of them. (Heb.)

There is another factor or problem, however, one wants to look at it. Adam was an adult when confronted with the choice he made. Christ entered the world as a baby. Was he kept by the power of God from sinning until he, too, faced life as an adult? It is also of interest to take into consideration where each of the gospels begins it's record. Marks states "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God,"- and begins his narrative with the proclamation of John the Baptist. Matthew begins with a genealogy tracing Jesus' earthly ancestry from Abraham and David, and then sets the record in book keeping format: Here is the prophecy; here is the fulfillment. A few brief episodes are given , and Jesus Christ enters the scene at the time of his baptism. Luke gives the largest number of experiences from his pre-adulthood, even citing an experience showing that he was not like other children. John reaches back into eternity, and declares that Jesus as the Word was with God from the very beginning. While no sinful act is recorded, no explanation is given in any of the gospels as to why and how he could live above sin. Neither is there found any charge on the part of the devil that Christ was given an advantage.

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