



"Watchman, what of the night?"



"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

► THIS ISSUE'S READING

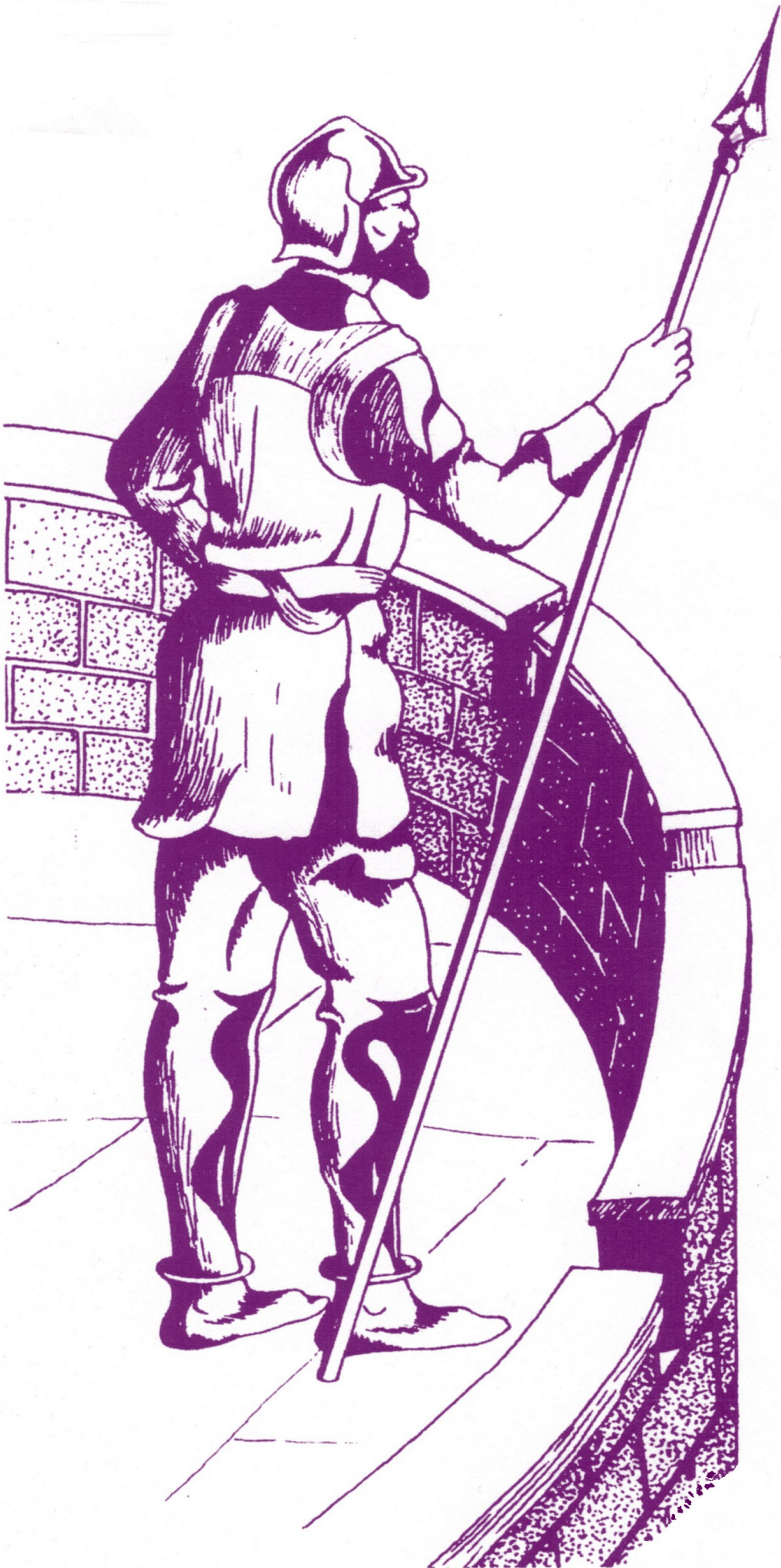
**"THE TRUE BIBLICAL
DOCTRINE CONCERNING
THE INCARNATION OF
JESUS – REVISITED"
(ADDENDUM 'B' [Concluded] –
ADDENDUM 'C')**

Editor's Preface

With this Issue of the thought paper, the continuing addenda presentations concerning the flesh (humanity) that Christ assumed in the Incarnation progresses onward.

The first write up concludes the Addendum 'B' article on the Incarnation as understood by those involved in the 'Holy Flesh Movement.' Its aberrant teaching on the humanity that the incarnate Jesus assumed appears to be the only major departure from the biblical view of Christ's Incarnation that Seventh-day Adventists had held up to that time. And though practically all the primary leaders and adherents renounced their involvement in the Movement after its discreditation at the 1901 S.D.A. General Conference Session, some of its doctrinal sentiments regarding Christ's incarnational humanity continued to subtly surface for years afterward.

The second write up of addenda supplementary material will be the beginning of an Addendum 'C' presentation on The Incarnation as set forth in the 1957 edition of the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (QOD).¹ This publication, which followed in the wake of the 1955-1956 S.D.A. / Evangelical Conferences, brought officially out into open view crucial doctrinal alterations on the Humanity of Jesus and the Atonement. Heretofore these notions / teachings, though popular and embraced by many throughout 'Christendom,' had overall remained largely concealed from open view within the Adventist



community due to their unbiblical nature. The theological upheaval in Adventism that ensued after the release of *QOD* continues to this day. It was reprinted and released in 2003 by the Andrews University Press in an Annotated Edition as part of its Adventist Classic Library series.² The annotations in this 2003 edition of *QOD* are by Dr. George R. Knight, who was the general editor of the volumes in this Classic series.

At the very outset of this edition, Knight himself in an (unnumbered) page captioned "Viewpoints" gives an assessment of the effect that *QOD* has had on the S.D.A. Community:

"But *Questions on Doctrine* did set forth one problematic change in Adventist theology; a change done in such a way that it alienated various factions of the church theologically. The publication of *Questions on Doctrine* did more than any other single event in Adventist history to create what appears to be permanently warring factions within the denomination."²

"The Incarnation In The Final Conflict And The Restitution Of All Things "

ADDENDUM 'B'

The Incarnation As Perceived And Taught In The Holy Flesh Movement [Resumed From *WWN*, Issue # 69] ³

Elder R. S. Donnell, president of the Indiana Conference, responded [*To Elder A.T. Jones' position that Christ had assumed the post-fallen nature of Adam in the Incarnation*] with a series of articles which he placed in the Indiana Reporter. In his first article he quoted a sentence from an article in the *Signs of the Times* (June 13, 1900). It read:

"Christ came to this earth and stood where Adam stood, overcoming where Adam failed to overcome."⁴ Then he commented:

"Now Christ stood where Adam stood, and Adam stood there without a taint of sin. So

Christ must have stood where Adam stood before his Fall – that is, without a taint of sin. This must be so, for Paul continues the subject, and in verse 11 he 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 it is the sanctified ones who (sic) He is not ashamed to call brethren. Further it is the sanctified ones of whose flesh He partakes. 'Forasmuch, then, as the children (or brethren, sanctified ones) are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise (just as the sanctified ones are partakers) took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.' (Hebrews 2: 14). (*What I Taught in Indiana*, pp. 4-5).⁵

In his "Article Two", Donnell continued this supposition. He wrote:

"In taking up this subject we will begin just where we left off in our last [first] article. In that, when we closed we were considering the fact that Christ Himself took part of the flesh and blood, just as the children did. That is, He took part of the same flesh the children possessed. We found, also, that the children are the sanctified ones. Now the sanctified ones are surely those upon whom the truth of God and the power of the Holy Spirit has wrought – the ones who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, those who have been created unto good works, the same which God hath before ordained that they should walk in." (*Ibid.*, pg. 5).⁵

Why did Donnell assume the necessity of such a conclusion? He explains:

"Men can continually do righteous acts only as God is incarnate in them; and it was God's purpose from the beginning to dwell in every created being, so that good works, or He Himself, might always appear in them. But in sinful man Satan is incarnate, and God and Satan cannot dwell together. The only reason why God does not dwell in man is be-

cause sin is there, and in order for God to again dwell in man sin must be eradicated. The body of Christ was a body in which God was incarnate, and as God and Satan cannot dwell together, the body of Christ must have been a body from which even every tendency to sin must have been wholly eradicated." (*Ibid.*).⁵

While the whole Conference Committee, and most of the ministry followed the leaders of the Movement (S. S. Davis, the conference revivalist, and R. S. Donnell, the conference president) one minister, Elder S. G. Huntington, voiced his opposition and gave form to his protest. He printed a tract on the "Mission Press," La Fayette, Indiana. The conclusion of this sixteen page tract read:

"Now, since we have been studying the humanity of Christ, let none think that we would distract from or forget His divinity. Although Jesus 'the Sin Bearer, [endured] the wrath of divine justice, and for [our sakes became] sin itself .' [D. of A., pg. 756⁶] yet, through His implicit faith in His Father, He was fortified so that His divine nature overwhelmingly triumphed over His sinful nature and hereditary tendencies. Thus from the cradle to Calvary, His days of trial and probation, He lived a pure, holy and sinless life. Thus He met the demands of the broken law, and became 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.'

"Now just as God in Christ, 4,000 years this side of Creation, lived a perfect, spotless life in sinful flesh, so through faith in Him, He will cleanse us from all our unrighteousness, impart to us His own righteousness, take up His abode in our hearts, and live the same kind of life in our sinful flesh six thousand years this side of Creation. Then we can truly say, 'as He is [in character], so are we in this world.'" 1 John 4: 17. (*The Son of Man*, pg. 16, emphasis his).⁷

In this same tract, Huntington scored the interpretation given by Donnell in regard to the "brethren" (Hebrews. 2: 17), whose na-

ture Christ supposedly took when 'the Word flesh came to be" (John 1: 14, Greek text). (Both sides quoted extensively from the Writings of Ellen G. White.) In a section captioned, "The Brethren," he wrote:

"'But not to any class is Christ's love restricted. He identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints.' (DA, pg. 638⁶). Notice, His brethren are every child of Adam – sinners, men and women under the law, and not simply the spiritual seed of Abraham alone. Now if the spiritual seed of Abraham and the sanctified ones only are those referred to, and they being redeemed and no longer under the law, and Jesus was made like unto them, then it would be evident that Jesus was not made under the law at all. But the Scriptures, which cannot be broken [John 10: 35] declare plainly that He was. So let God be true, and every man a liar Romans 3: 4." (*Ibid.*, pg. 3, emph. his).⁷

The question between the men in Indiana was not the matter of whether the gospel provided men redemption from sin, or whether the power of the Holy Spirit could keep human beings from sinning. The question was the humanity of Christ – in what flesh did He come as the Son of man, the flesh of Adam after or before the Fall; and if after the Fall, in what likeness – "the likeness of sinful flesh" or the likeness of sanctified or "born again" humanity.

The demise of the Holy Flesh Movement came at the General Conference Session in 1901. The re-organization controversy at the Conference overshadowed the doctrinal conflict projected by the advocates of the "Holy

Flesh" doctrines. Fifteen days after the session opened, Elder E. J. Waggoner was asked to give the evening message at 7 p.m. He chose for his text – Hebrews 10: 4-10. Then he introduced a question that had been given to him which read as follows:

"Was that holy thing which was born of the virgin Mary born in sinful flesh, and did that flesh have the same evil tendencies to contend with that ours does?" (1901 GC Bulletin, pg. 403).⁸ In Waggoner's answer there was left little doubt as to what he was talking about. He mentioned the concept of sinless flesh, and declared it to be "the deification of the devil" (*Ibid.*, pg. 405).⁸ He stated very specifically as to when the change would come in the flesh, and what the results would be. His words were:

"The flesh will be opposed to the Spirit of God so long as we have it, but when the time comes that mortality is swallowed up of life, then the conflict will cease. Then we shall no longer have to fight against the flesh, but that sinless life which we laid hold of by faith and which was manifest in our sinful bodies, will then by simple faith be continued throughout all eternity in the sinless body." (*Ibid.*, pg. 406).⁸

What then is the purpose of this earthly struggle? Waggoner continued:

"When God has given this witness to the world of His power to save to the uttermost, to save sinful beings, and to live a perfect life in sinful flesh, then He will remove the disabilities and give us better circumstances in which to live. But first of all this wonder must be worked out in sinful man, not simply in the person of Jesus Christ, but in Jesus Christ reproduced and multiplied in the thousands of His followers. So not simply in the few sporadic cases, but in the whole body of the church, the perfect life of Christ will be manifested to the world, and that will be the last crowning work which will either save or condemn men; and greater testimony than that there is not, and cannot be, be-

cause there is none greater than God. When God is manifest among men, not simply as God apart from man, but as God in man, suffering all that man suffered, subject to everything that man is subject to, what greater power can be manifest in the universe than that?" (*Ibid.*).⁸

During the sermon, Dr. Waggoner challenged those listening to settle it, each for himself, whether or not he was truly "out of the church of Rome." He then commented:

"There are great many that have got the marks yet, but I am persuaded of this, that every soul who is here to-night desires to know the way of truth and righteousness, and that there is no one here who is unconsciously clinging to the dogmas of the papacy, who does not desire to be freed from them.

"Do you not see that the idea that the flesh of Jesus was not like ours (because we know that ours is sinful) necessarily involves the idea of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary? Mind you, in Him is no sin, but the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, the marvel of the ages, the wonder of the angels, that thing which even now they desire to understand, and which they can form no just idea of, only as they are taught it by the church, is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh. O, that is a marvel, is it not?" (*Ibid.*, pg. 404).⁸

The next day, April 17, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg spoke at the morning meeting on the subject of the medical missionary work. At the close of the meeting, Ellen White arose and presented her testimony concerning the Movement in Indiana. (*Ibid.*, pp. 419-422).⁸ The next day, the two leaders of the Movement, Donnell and Davis, made confession to the delegates. On the 19th three other members of the Indiana Conference committee added their testimonies. The Holy Flesh Movement as such was over; but the doctrinal teachings of this Movement re-

garding the nature of Christ's humanity, that He came "born – born again," or like His "brethren" – "the sanctified ones" has repeatedly appeared again in the Church. Accordingly, the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination today is largely divided in a debate over the human nature Christ assumed while in the flesh. This confusion is also being promoted and taught by certain Adventist "independent ministries" as well.

Even though the two leaders – Donnell and Davis – confessed their error and professed to accept the Testimony given, neither abandoned his belief in the Incarnation as he taught it during the Holy Flesh revival. Relieved of their ministerial responsibilities following the General Conference session, S. S. Davis retired to his home in Elnora, Indiana, and R. S. Donnell went there to live for a few years. In 1905, Elder Donnell was called to serve the church in Raleigh, Tennessee, near Memphis. He continued his contact with Davis by correspondence. On one occasion, he sent to him a ten page manuscript which he had written on the nature of Christ and man. In this manuscript, Donnell wrote:

"For one I must say, and upon the authority of the Bible, that Christ never sinned, and if He never sinned, that man don't (sic.) live, and never has lived that can prove that He was in sinful flesh. The only way by which one can prove it, is to point out the sins, or even one sin that He committed. He took a body which showed by its deteriorated condition, that the effects of sin was shown by it, but His life proved that there was no sin in it. It was a body which the Father had prepared for Him. (Hebrews 10: 5). Christ's body represented a body redeemed from its fallen spiritual nature, but not from its fallen, or deteriorated physical nature. It was a body redeemed from sin, and with that body Christ clothed His divinity; thus by His life, on earth, He showed what humanity will do when filled with the divine mind. Then every member of the human race, who will re-

nounce Satan and his works, and will permit Christ to clothe himself with His humanity, in that act, becomes a member of the family of heaven. That is just what it will be, if we will let the divine mind come into us. It will be divinity clothed with humanity, and that is just what Christ was. And thus clothed He did no sin. Is that putting it too strong? Well that is just the way that God wants it to be put." (*The Nature of Christ and Man* - An unpublished manuscript)

In 1903, Elder I. J. Hankins, who succeeded Donnell to the presidency of the Indiana Conference, wrote to S. S. Davis in Elnora, Indiana, asking him certain questions about his beliefs. Of the eight questions asked, four of them involved the doctrine of the Incarnation. To these four questions Davis responded as follows:

Question #4

"Please state in a few words your views on the nature of Christ?"

Answer – "Luke 1:35: 'that holy thing.'"

Question #5

"Did Christ's flesh have in it any weakness or natural tendency to sin as the result of the Fall?"

Answer – "Testimony No. 2 the last three words on page 201 and continued on page 202 - 'was a brother in infirmities, but not possessing like passions.' That is all on that point I care to say."

Question #6

"Was Mary the mother of Jesus like all other women, sinful?"

Answer – "I could not say how full of sin she was but I suppose that she had her share, perhaps not as bad as some, and maybe more than some as there are degrees in heredity and depravity, and there is no evidence that she had an immaculate conception."

Question #7

"Is every child born into the world naturally inclined to evil, even before it is old enough

to discern between good and evil?"

Answer – "Yes, unless preserved from the law of heredity in conception by the power of the Holy Ghost. See Psalm 51: 5, 'Shapen in sin,' also Ephesians 2: 3, 'by nature children of wrath'"

(Letter: S. S. Davis to I. J. Hankins dated March 15, 1903).

Of all the men involved in the "Holy Flesh" Movement, only S. S. Davis never returned to the ministry of the Church. In 1920 the Davis family moved to Nebraska, where on September 26, 1926, S. S. Davis was re-ordained as a minister in the General Baptist Church. He died two years later in 1928, at the age of 73, and is buried in Gordon, Nebraska. ❖

WHG (GLP)

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“ The Incarnation In The Final Conflict And The Restitution Of All Things ”

ADDENDUM 'C'

The Incarnation As Presented During The Aftermath Of The 1955-1956 Seventh-day Adventist / Evangelical Conferences In The Book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine*

The authors of the 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine* cited the prophecy of Isaiah 53: 3-4, and Matthew's reference to it (8: 17) as the basis for their first premise in regard to the Incarnation. After quoting Isaiah, that the Messiah would be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and Matthew's interpretive comment – "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," they wrote:

"But let us observe further what is implied in this. Notice the words used to express the

thought, both in Isaiah 53 and Matthew 8. He bore our *griefs*, our *sorrows*, our *infirmities*, our *sicknesses*. The original words are also translated *pains*, *diseases*, and *weaknesses*. (pg. 58).¹ After quoting references from the Writings, they continued:

"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 this vicariously, just as vicariously He bore the iniquities of us all." (pp. 59 60; emphasis theirs).¹

Their second premise is bluntly stated:

"Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was *exempt* from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam. He was "without sin," not only in His outward conduct, but (sic) in His very nature." (pg. 383; *emph. added*).¹

The two premises together are saying that although Christ took the fallen flesh of man – "born in the flesh" – He was "*exempt*" from that which made the flesh, "fallen" – its defilement.

We italicized, "*exempt*" because it has theological connotations. It was used by James Cardinal Gibbons in his explanation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Interpreting the Dogma's clause – "preserved free from every stain of original sin" – he 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." (*The Faith of Our Fathers*, pg. 171, 91st edition; *emph. added*).⁹

If Christ was "*exempt*" then there was a divine intervention. If not, then Christ's humanity received from Mary would be no different than the humanity of every other child of Adam. Roman Catholicism seeks to avoid

this problem by making Mary "exempt." To escape another problem which would arise if Mary conceived a second time, but by Joseph, they deny that any other children were born to Mary.

There is one difference between Jesus Christ and others born into humanity. He had a pre-existent identity and individuality. He took "upon Himself" our fallen nature. Our identity and individuality is the result of the union of our father and mother thus bequeathing to us a fallen nature. We are born fallen; Christ was not. How a Divine pre-existent Being could begin as a fetus in the womb of Mary remains a mystery to both men and angels.

» *To be Continued.*

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 58; 59-60; 383.
2. Adventist Classic Library, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine, Annotated Edition* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), Viewpoints.
3. Gary L. Patrick, *"Watchman, what of the night?"* (Nora Springs, IA: Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., Issue # 69 - Feb. / March 2025, "The True Biblical Doctrine Concerning The Incarnation Of Jesus - Revisited"/Addendum'A' [Concluded] - Addendum'B'), 1-7.
https://www.alfiowa.com/IOWA-BACK-ISSUES/WWN_Issue_69.pdf
4. Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times Articles, Volume 4* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, June 13, 1900), 123.
5. Robert S. Donnell, *What I Taught In Indiana* (Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.: S.R. Buckley, Publisher, 1992 – 15 page booklet), 4-5; 5.
6. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 756; 638.
7. S.G. Huntington, *The Son of Man* (La Fayette, IN: Mission Press – 16 page tract), 16; 3.
8. *Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Session* (Battle Creek, MI: 1901 Daily Bulletin, Vol. 4 – Extra, No. 17; Extra, No. 18), 403, 405, 406, 404; 419-422.
9. James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy Company, Publishers – Ninety-first Edition, 1917), 171. <https://catholicshield.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/faithofourfather00gibb.pdf>

*All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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