



*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

## **"THAT I MAY KNOW HIM"**

### **THEME OF ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP**

- + -

This year the Annual Fellowship meetings were renewed after a lapse of two years. We chose two topics for seminar discussions, one of which we recognized as very controversial - the Doctrine of God. While those attending the fellowship shared differing concepts in regard to the Godhead, a spirit of unity prevailed, not in every detail, but in broad lines which permitted individual conviction in certain details yet in an atmosphere of brotherly love. At the close, all without exception could testify - "It was good to have been here." Minds expanded as we attempted "to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God." (Great Controversy, p. 599)

There were several reasons for the decision to accept the risk of open discussion of such a controversial subject as the Doctrine of God. 1) The term, "trinity," is not found either in the Bible, or the Writings. 2) The term, "trinity," was first used in the 1931 Statement of Beliefs. 3) The unanimous Statement of Belief on the Doctrine of God in all Statements from 1872 through 1914 is in stark contrast to the Statement voted at the Dallas General Conference Session in 1980. (See Key Doctrinal Comparisons, Section #3) To add to these reasons, it was documented during one of the factual presentations preceding the discussion -

"The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church." (Handbook for Today's Catholic, p. 12) This should cause immediate concern as to what one's belief should be if he does not wish to be involved in "the mystery of iniquity."

A group of laymen in central Ohio have given serious and careful study to this doctrine both in paganism and Catholic Church history, as well as doing research on the same doctrine in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We invited these studious laypersons to come and present their findings in a factual way, to be followed by an open discussion of the doctrine. Donald and Janet Cox from Heath, Ohio, gave the background of the "trinity" in Pagan and Catholic Church history, while Robert C. Diener of Newark, Ohio, discussed the development of the Doctrine of God in Seventh-day Adventist Church history.

Naturally, some questions of procedure, and the use of the Writings in the discussion had to be established. A sheet of quotations from the Writings of Ellen G. White as to how her writings were to be used in the formulation of doctrines had been prepared. (This may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Foundation office with your request for these quotations) It was pointed out that in the beginning when the Adventist pioneers searched to find truth, they studied the Bible till they came to an impasse, then the Spirit of the Lord gave guidance through His "messenger." (Special Testimonies, Series B,

#2, pp. 56-57) The lesson of this example, we endeavored to use at various points in the discussion. I am sure that some when they listen to the tapes will wish that it had been used more frequently; however, at each point we sought to exhaust the Scriptural revelation before turning to any other source.

The method of how we should approach this doctrine was discussed. Do we seek to move from the pagan triad concept to the truth about God, or do we recognize paganism for what it is, and seek to find the true picture of God in the Old Testament as revealed in the earthly sanctuary - God seated between the cherubim - and one of those cherubim a created being?

It was observed that the Bible deals primarily with the revelation of God in time with only a glimpse back into the first Eternity, and with only prophetic suggestions as to the second Eternity. (Rev. 21:2-3) Thus, if we had full information of God in the first Eternity, and a full disclosure of God's intent for the 144,000 after all sin is annihilated from the Universe, we might find that we would have to formulate several different statements on the Doctrine of God - God in eternity prior to the entrance of sin, God in the Old Testament prior to the Incarnation, God in the New Testament as a result of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, and God in the eternity to come. Yet over all time and eternity, there abides the transcendent Being we call, "Our Father."

Human limitation was recognized. Job was asked - "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7) - with the obvious answer being - "NO!" The secret things belong unto God, but everyone in attendance was determined to understand to the fullest those things which belong unto us and to our children. (Deut. 29:29) Superceding the knowledge of God as a doctrine was the challenge of the Lord through Jeremiah to understand His character. The Lord said:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight. (Jer. 9:23-24)

Another factor was recognized as essential

to an understanding of the Doctrine of God, that being the purpose of God in the creation of man, and what resulted when God's intentions were made known. "Human beings were a new and distinct order." (R&H, Feb. 11, 1902) "Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God." (Ibid., June 18, 1895) It was over this objective of God in the creation of man that triggered the rebellion in Heaven. Lucifer desired to be consulted in regard to the creation of man. "He wished to be highest, next to God, and receive the highest honors. Until this time all heaven was in order, harmony, and perfect submission to the government of God." (SG, I:17)

A little thought over the origin of sin in Heaven and its transfer to this planet due to the surrender of our first parents to the sophistry of Lucifer gives insight as to the why of the pagan trinity concepts with their multiple triads. It also gives meaning to "the serpent's" suggestion - "Ye shall be as gods." (Gen. 3:5)

After the factual presentations on the concepts of the trinity in paganism and papalism, and the history of the Doctrine of God in Adventist literature, we began as a group, the study of the Bible to see what it actually taught - no more and no less. The first verse of the first chapter introduces the Doctrine of God - "In the beginning Gods" (Elohim, plural) Hebrew scholars would have us to understand the plural usage as "the majestic plural" (Sig. in force) The revelation of God in these early chapters of Genesis do not support this conclusion. The Elohim converse among Themselves - "Let us make man in our own image." (Gen. 1:26) When this man fell into sin, again the conversation is recorded - "Behold, the man is become as one of us." (Gen. 3:22)

The actual use of the singular and plural forms in Genesis 3:22-24 is thought provoking: "The Jehovah (singular) Gods (plural) said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil... So He (singular) drove out the man." The Shema of Israel (Deut. 6:4-5) also reveals this interesting use of plural and the singular. It reads: "Hear (shema), O Israel: Jehovah (singular) your Gods (plural) is Jehovah one. You shall love Jehovah (singular) your Gods (plural) with all your heart." The word, "one" in

verse 4 is translated from the Hebrew word, echad. As used elsewhere, its use here presents a challenge in concept. When the idea to be expressed is "one" in the sense of only one, the word, yechid, is used. An example of this use is to be found in Genesis 22:2, where Abraham was told to take Isaac "thine only son" to the land of Moriah. The use of echad as "one" is found in Genesis 1:5, where "evening" and "morning" are declared to be "day one." In Genesis 2:24, Adam and Eve - two - are declared to be "one" (echad) flesh.

Based on the above, we wrote down the first conclusion - The Bible presents Elohim - though One - as more than one distinct Being.

In Zechariah 6:12-13, where the plan of redemption is outlined in prophecy, it is plainly stated - "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." The Hebrew could have been rendered just as well as the counsel "between the Two of Them." Isaiah 44:6 tells us that "The Lord the King of Israel, and His redeemer the Lord of hosts" could say - "I am the first and I am the last; and beside Me, there is no Elohim."

We then wrote down a second conclusion - In the Old Testament, the Elohim consists of two Beings.

What then was the relationship between these Beings? When God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, He declared His name to be "I Am that I Am." (Exodus 3:14) In the New Testament, this NAME is assumed by both the Almighty (Rev. 1:8) and Jesus Christ even though clothed in humanity. (John 8:58) This NAME is derived in the Hebrew from the verb - "to be."

We then placed a third conclusion - The Elohim are perceived as ever-existent and self-existent.

At this point some demurred citing Micah 5:2 - a Messianic prophecy referring to Christ - that "His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In this they were following E. J. Waggoner who in commenting on this text wrote -

We know that Christ 'proceeded forth and came from God' (John 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of men." (Christ and His Righteousness, p. 9)

Naturally a discussion of the Father-Son

relationship followed. Was Christ a Son by generation, or by "decree"? (Ps. 2:7; Heb. 1:5) Or did He become a "Son" because of His entrance into humanity? Was He eternally the Son of God? Is the Sonship an "office" to which He was called, even as He was called to the "office" of the High Priesthood? (Heb. 5:5-6)

Some perceived Jesus Christ as eternally the Son of God through generation while others understood Him to be the Son of God Designate from all eternity, from the time that the counsel of peace was covenanted. But what was remarkable about this whole seminar discussion on the Doctrine of God was that the spirit of the Council of Nicaea which formulated the Nicene Creed was not manifest! No one engaged in a frenzied discussion over any point, much less falling out over an iota as the bishops at Nicaea did in 325 A.D. (See The Two Republics, pp. 347-350)

Coming to the New Testament, we faced the Incarnation as described by Luke. It reads:

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

The word, "thing" is supplied by the translators because the word, "holy" is an adjective and requires a noun to modify. But since the same adjective is used to describe the Spirit which was to "come upon" Mary, it would be correct to conclude that the Holy "Spirit" which would be born of her would be the One called "the Son of God." The "how" of this transition into humanity remains a mystery to both men and angels. However a comment in the Writings indicates that at the Incarnation, "a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh." (4BC:1147)

Further discussion ensued on the Holy Spirit, but it being evident that the Incarnation was definitely involved in any New Testament concepts which would enlarge our perceptions on the Doctrine of God, we concluded this section of the Seminar. Next year at the Annual Fellowship, one section of the Seminar studies will begin at this point on the Incarnation.

#

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." - John 17:3

# HOW SHALL WE INTERPRET PROPHECY?

The second section of the Seminar studies of the recent Annual Fellowship concerned the rule of interpretation by which the prophecies could be properly understood. The importance of the methods of interpretation cannot be over-emphasized. Professor G. Ebeling, a scholar known for his expertise in Biblical interpretation, has suggested that "the history of the Christian church is the history of the interpretation of Scripture." Commenting on this concept, Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel, Dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary wrote:

If there is validity, even in a general sense, in this suggestion, then it would follow that the history of any church body is also the history of its interpretation of Scripture. By implication a shift or change in the method used for interpretation of Scripture by a church, its scholars, or others within it inevitably would be accompanied by a shift or change in its course, doctrines, self-understanding, purpose, and mission. (Biblical Interpretation Today, p. 1)

Today we face in the Community of Adventism various concepts of prophetic interpretation with the resultant effect that the understanding of the books of Daniel and Revelation which have been the heritage of Adventism is completely altered. Those landmarks established by prophecy are no longer considered valid, and are removed. Adventism is facing a "new" innovation in prophetic interpretation as well as a "new theology" in the understanding of Christ's atoning ministry. With this change comes bizarre explanations of the prophetic symbols of both Daniel and Revelation which are nothing short of speculation.

A very concise differentiation between the various systems of prophetic interpretation is given in the Bible Students' Source Book. It reads:

The Preterist says that almost everything in the book of Revelation was fulfilled long ago, the Historicist, that it has been fulfilling all the time, and some of the things foretold are happening in our own day, the Futurist that nothing of that which is prophesied [in Revelation] from the beginning of chapter four on has yet taken place, nor can take place until just before the end. (Commentary Reference Series, Vol. 9, p. 769)

Dr. Desmond Ford suggests that if his "apotelesmatic" theory were accepted as a tool to understand the prophecies of the Bible, "some differences between the systems would be automatically resolved." (Daniel, p. 69) In other words, the differences between the Jesuitical interpretations - the preterist and the futurist - and the Protestant (Adventist) - the historicist - could be resolved by a compromise! And what does Ford mean by his "apotelesmatic" theory? Here is his definition:

The apotelesmatic principle is a convenient term for referring to the concept that a particular prophecy in outline or as regards a dominant feature may have more than one application in time." (Daniel 8: 14 et. al., p. 302)

Are the prophecies inspired by God no more specific than the revelations of the Delphic Oracle of paganism? Is God merely playing games with us when He asks us to give heed to the "more sure word of prophecy"? (See II Peter 1:19) The repeating of history does not mean a repeating of prophetic fulfillment. Prophecy is how God looks at a certain event and/or power involving or to be involved in human history. For example, prophecy tells how God views the Papacy. History is being repeated and the Papacy is once more asserting itself in the affairs of earthly governments - but are the prophecies which pointed out the rise of the Papacy the first time being repeated? No! - but the lesson of how God views that antichristian power is left written in fulfilled prophecy for us today.

A more recent intrusion into the prophetic interpretive milieu is the Hauser-Wheeling axis. Hauser in his book - Give Glory to Him - honestly tells his readers that the method of

prophetic interpretation which he is using "does not fit any of the previous models but is a combination." (p. 3) He refers to the fundamental Adventist historicist interpretation of the prophecies as "horse and buggy" which is to be displayed merely in an antique museum. Note his comparison:

The historical approach has served us well in the past, but, like the horse and buggy, no longer fits our needs. This is not to discard the historical approach as untrue. It is, like the horse and buggy, no longer relevant! (Ibid., p. 2)

The "roots" of the Advent Movement are in the Great Second Advent Awakening under William Miller. Miller was a careful student of prophecy. He devised for his own study a system of rules based on the methods of interpretation revealed in the Bible itself. By these rules He searched for the proper interpretation of the prophecies. These we considered carefully at the Seminar. (A copy of these rules will be sent free to anyone who will supply a stamped self-addressed envelope requesting them)

How should we approach the study of prophecy now that well over one hundred years have elapsed since the beginnings of the Advent Movement? Further, it would appear that perhaps there are some problems in our forefather's interpretation of the prophecies. Discard their understanding and study, and invent some new scheme as Dr. Hauser indicated he has done? NO! We have this counsel:

The Lord has made His people the repository of sacred truth. Upon every individual who has had the light of present truth devolves the duty of developing that truth on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done. (March 30, 1897, emphasis supplied)

Discard that prophetic truth given to us? No! Never! Relegate it to a museum? No! Develop it - "that truth" - to a higher scale of understanding than it has been previously perceived? YES!

In the seminar studies, we started with the ABC prophecy of Daniel - Chapter 2 - and accepting the historic understanding as developed by our spiritual fore-fathers, we sought to expand the concepts to a higher plane of perception. There the head of gold represented Babylon; the breasts and arms of silver, Medo-Persia; the thighs of brass, Grecia. Then the legs of iron, Rome; but was this

only imperial Rome? Or does it represent both Pagan and Papal Rome? In the dream, the "iron" as in the legs, goes into the toes - to the end! Thus it could not represent Pagan Rome only. As the prophetic message is amplified in Daniel 7 - "the little horn" arises from the fourth beast, and has no existence separated from the body of that beast. This fourth beast - Rome - with its "little horn" continues "till it is given to the burning flame" - the end. (Dan. 7:11) The "iron" then in Daniel 2 is seen to represent both the Pagan and Papal phases of Rome.

The development of "that truth" would place the division between the legs of iron and the feet of part iron and part clay at 1798, rather than 476. Therefore, the ten toes of the image would more aptly coincide with the "ten horns" of Revelation 17, than with the "ten horns" of Daniel 7, three of which were plucked up "by the roots," leaving only seven for the period following 476 A.D. See Daniel 7:8.

It was also observed, that in the dream as described to Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel, the "stone" struck the image upon its feet, and then were the empires of earth broken up to become as "the chaff of the summer threshingfloors." Following this - the "stone" became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." (Dan. 2:35) In the simple symbolism of Daniel 2, the whole history of humankind from Daniel's day till after the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 is portrayed. Further, by checking the symbolism as used in Daniel, the expression "without hand" refers to direct intervention by God in the affairs of human history - something beyond the power and ingenuity of man to perform. (Daniel 8:25, 11:45; Hebrews 8:2, 9:11)

As we proceeded to review the prophecies given directly to Daniel beginning with Chapter 7, we sought to discover within each prophecy interpretive clues by which the vision given could be rightly understood. Daniel 7 is vitally important because it gives in sequence, events by which can be identified in history, "the man of sin."

Daniel was informed that "the great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth." (7:17) Further, he was told that "the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth" (7:23), thus giving an interpretive rule that "king" and "kingdom" are interchangeable. These

"beasts" arose in succession - there was the "first", and "another, a second," "after" which came a third, only to be followed by another - "after this... a fourth beast." (7:4, 5, 6, 7)

Daniel was primarily concerned with the fourth beast - his ten horns, and the little horn, "whose look was more stout than his fellows." (7:19-20) He knew the meaning of the symbolism of the lion with eagle's wings. Every day over the years of his government service, he saw in the mosaics of the walls, and in the statuary which lined the corridors, the symbol of Babylon - a lion with eagle's wings. The Bible student also finds this meaning attached to the same symbol in the prophecy of Jeremiah where the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar are prophesied. (Jer. 49:19a, 22a, 28). Here again then, is the same succession of empires as outlined in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar of the metallic image.

A new aspect is introduced in the succession of earth's empires - a judgment and a review of books of record. (7:9-10) The emphasis of this judgment is two-fold: 1) Against the "little horn" and 2) For 'the Son of man, and the subjects of His kingdom - "the saints." (7:21-22, 26)

Even though the reign of "the little horn" is given as "a time, and times, and a dividing of time" - 1260 prophetic days or years - "his dominion" continues till the beast that succors him is "given to the burning flame." (7:25-26, 11)

Accepting the date as established by the continued revelation in Daniel 8 and 9 - the 2300 days culminating in the beginning of the cleansing of the sanctuary in 1844 - we find that the judgment of Daniel 7 coincides sequentially with the time indicated for the "cleansing." Observe carefully this sequence:

The Lion - Babylon - 606-536 B.C. (7:4)

The Bear - Medo-Persia - 536-331 B.C. (7:5)

The Leopard - Grecia - 331-176 B.C. (7:6)

The Non-descript Beast - Rome - 176 B.C - 476 A.D. (7:8)

The Little Horn - Papacy - 538-1798 A.D. (7:8)

The Judgment - After 1798 - 1844 (7:9-10)

Then came the "voice of the great words which the horn spake." (7:11) In 1854, the Papacy

promulgated the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, and in 1870, the Dogma of Papal Infallibility when the Pope speaks ex cathedra.

This prophecy of Daniel 7 gives a solid basis for the doctrine of the investigative judgment when understood according to the historicist system of prophetic interpretation. Daniel is told that at the coming of the Ancient of days in judgment, a decision is rendered in favor of the saints, and then they possess the kingdom. (7:21-22) The saints possess the kingdom when Jesus comes the second time. (Matt. 25:31, 34: Note the "when" and the "then") The "judgment" rendered in favor of the saints precedes the second advent.

As Daniel 8 was surveyed, within it was observed a principle of interpretation which finds use also in a correct interpretation of sections of Revelation. The principle is simply that one looks at the vision from the time point and place where the prophet received the revelation. Here in Chapter 8, Daniel is stated to be "in the province of Elam" standing "by the river of Ulai."

(8:2) The symbols - ram, he-goat, and the little horn - are all described as coming or moving in relationship to direction - east, west, north, south. This can only be correctly understood with reference to where Daniel was standing as the vision unfolded before him. This with the explanation of Gabriel, there is no doubt left as to the meaning of each symbol. (8:20-21)

Further insights on points of interpretation both in Daniel and Revelation can be gained by a careful review of the taped recordings.

#

#### A WORD ABOUT THE TAPES

The tapes are unedited, except in the correction of a linguistic error. The section of the Seminar tapes on the Doctrine of God is not being set forth as an infallible dogma but as a recording of a discussion to stimulate a deeper study of the Bible in its revelation of God to us. The contest between truth and error, between the forces of God and the forces of him who abode not in the truth will become more and more intense. While "Satan and his angels are wide awake, and intensely active, working with energy

→ → To page 7, Col. 2

COMMENTS

FROM SOME WHO ATTENDED

"The 1986 Fellowship at Pinecrest, Arkansas, was very outstanding. The Holy Spirit was present in great abundance, and the spirit of love and unity for each other was very manifest. The subjects presented were very easily understood and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to be remembered for a long time."

Oregon

"We had our reservations [before coming] regarding the mode of study and research. Would they be effective? More importantly, would there be spiritual lessons and blessings?"

"Never in our 36 years of Adventist life have we been so blessed, so thoroughly educated, so stimulated to deeper study and experience than this past week at the campus. We are already laying plans for the 1987 fellowship and only God's altering of our plans will prevent our presence there. Thank you for being an instrument in His hands."

Oklahoma

"This has been a most precious ten days. Not just Monday through Sabbath - six days of the fellowship campmeeting - but all the days I have had the privilege of sharing with dear people I expect to see, visit, and dwell with through eternity. [Air flight schedules required this person to come in prior to time of meetings] I can not express my appreciation for this [first] opportunity to attend this Adventist Laymen's Fellowship camp meeting."

Oregon

- + -

A Suggestion from a Reader:

"May I suggest concerned laymen who wish to obtain a copy of Questions on Doctrine try looking in the following places: (1) used book stores; (2) second hand stores like Goodwill, Salvation Army, Thrift Shops and other similar places; (3) Flea Markets; and (4) used booksales by social organizations like women's auxiliaries to colleges and hospitals. Of course, a library would be an obvious place to look, also." [From a Library you could check it out and make copies of key pages.]

"A Word About the Tapes" - from p. 6

and perseverance through human instrumentalities to bring about his purpose of obliterating from the minds of men the knowledge of God," (R&H, 12/13/1892) we need to be exerting "all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures, and should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God." (GC, p. 599) These tapes are being released unedited with this objective in mind.

(If ordered separately)

The Seminar Studies & Discussions - \$15.00  
+10% postage & handling

[7 tapes - Keynote study; historical presentations, and discussions]

Evening Studies - Allen Stump (2 Tapes) \$5.00  
+\$1.00 postage & handling

["God's Hero" - "I Am Not Ashamed" - "Biblical Unity" - "The Returning Remnant."]

Morning Devotions - Joseph Cooper --- \$7.00  
+\$1.00 postage & handling

[3 Tapes - "The Parables of Christ"]

Sabbath Morning Sermon - Grotheer \$2.50  
+\$.50 postage & handling

["A Message Whose Time Has Come"]

If ordered as a whole, the total price \$27.50 postpaid. Make all checks payable to:

The Adventist Laymen's Foundation  
of Arkansas  
P. O. Box 789  
Lamar, AR 72846, USA

-----

"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 789, Lamar, AR 72846, USA.

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

Editor ----- Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

Any portion of this Thought Paper may be reproduced without further permission by adding the following credit line - "Reprinted from "Watchman, What of the Night?" Lamar, Arkansas.

Each issue is sent free upon request.