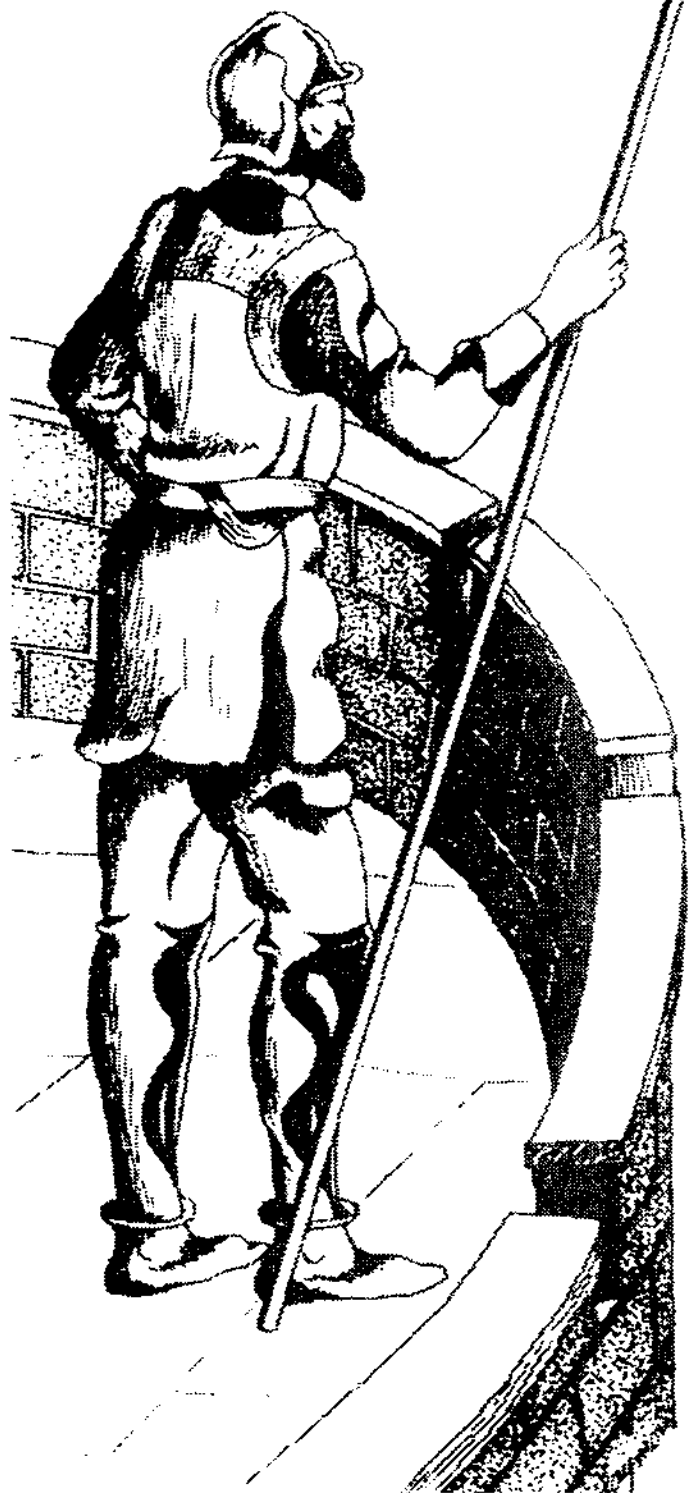


# "Watchman, what of the night?"

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

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



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## Editor's Preface

The last article in this issue is the most important, and relates to all the other articles as the solution to the problems noted in them. It was taken from the *Review & Herald*, July 26, 1892. In answering the question, "How shall we search the Scriptures?" sound counsel was given so as to obtain a solution to the dissension arising from the controversy which the 1888 General Conference spawned. It was never followed, and the 1888 controversy is still with us. Today with the promotion of a complete misrepresentation of what the doctrinal issues of 1888 were all about, by aberrant voices within the community of Adventism, and the revival of the controversy which surrounded the SDA-Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956 by the re-publication of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, the Adventist community is in greater need today for the counsel given in 1892 than at any period in its history.

The *Review* article noted some attitudes that serve as indicators as to whether there is a sincere desire for truth. One such attitude is described thus: "Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed." Such annoyance has been manifest by those presently leading the neo-antitrinitarianism noted as Smyrna Publishing in the card deck recently circulated by Tri-Media of Fort Worth, Texas. This can be documented by correspondence as well as by those in attendance at overseas meetings.

We have not considered as we ought to have who the God of Abraham really was. Think about it again. Then read carefully, "Think It Over," as well as Isaiah 57:15 with the corresponding texts.

## Another Historical Review

In the previous issue of WWN, we discussed the book, *The Trinity*, from the theological viewpoint as set forth by Dr. Woodrow Whidden, the major co-author. We also challenged the historical perspective given by Dr. Jerry Moon, another co-author, as to why the changed and enlarged statement on the Godhead was made in the 1980 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs. In this issue, we shall pursue the historical record from another perspective.

In a recent mailing of a card deck of advertisements to over 150,000 Adventist homes in the United States by TriMedia of Fort Worth, Texas, there was a card which offered a 48-page booklet which asked the question, *"What did the Adventist Pioneers Believe?"* Then there followed this comment:

This 48-page book is a compilation of quotes from Adventist pioneers, including the 1888 messengers, which reflects the unanimous position of the early Adventist Church concerning the most vital doctrine of Christianity.

The message contained on the card would lead one to conclude that "the most vital doctrine" is "the most precious message to His people" that God sent through the two "messengers" in 1888. Is this true, or is this a deceptive camouflage to cover the neo anti-trinitarian teachings the card's authors are promoting?

Certain words and concepts need to be defined. What does "pioneer" mean? How far down in time does the "early Adventist Church" extend? The word "pioneer" in *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* is defined by synonyms "earliest, original." As to the second question, by 1888 a "second" generation of Adventists were coming on the scene. E. J. Waggoner, one of the 1888 "messengers," was the son of J. H. Waggoner, who had become an "Adventist" in 1852. At the time of the organization of the Church in 1863, J. H. Waggoner was one of the committee of three that recommended the name "Seventh-day Adventist" for the Church. How

then could the Church in 1888, when E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones united their voices in the proclamation of righteousness by faith, be considered "the early Adventist Church"?

What did the "pioneers" believe in regard to the pre-existent Christ? Uriah Smith, in his first edition of *Thoughts on Revelation* in 1867 – just four years after the Church was organized – commenting on Revelation 3:14, wrote that Christ was "the first created being" (p. 59). Lynnford Beachy, who originally brought together this compilation in 1996, does not tell you this but quotes rather from Smith's 1882 edition of the same book after Smith had altered his viewpoint. This is deceptive.

Further, Beachy's original edition did not contain one single quotation from Ellen G. White, which could classify her as teaching anti-trinitarianism. Neither does this new revised edition that is being offered give any such quotation. Ellen White, however, is placed on center stage (see publication cover; again deceptive) in an attempt to achieve a twofold objective: 1) that we are to let the "pioneers" speak again; and 2) that we are not to move one "pin or pillar" of the foundation, or using a different figure of speech, we are not to remove the "landmarks."

If #1 was the major intent of the counsel given, why did Beachy not let Smith "speak" until his 1882 edition of *Thoughts on Daniel & Revelation*, and ignore reference to his 1867 position? Here, however, is a good example of what the teaching from our past history is to teach us: "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light" (*R&H*, March 25, 1890). This is what Smith did between 1867 and 1882. Why could he make this doctrinal progression and not move a pin or pillar of the foundation? The answer is simple: because the nature of the Godhead was *not* one of the "landmarks" or "pillars" of the Adventist faith that was not to be moved. Ellen White listed the "landmarks": 1) The cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven; 2) The first and second angels' messages and the third; 3) The temple of God in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God; 4) The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment; and 5) The

nonimmortality of the wicked. Then she added, "I can call to mind *nothing else* that can come under the head of the old landmarks" (Ms. 13, 1889).

On the other hand, Ellen White did speak in regard to the Godhead:

There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ (*Special Testimonies, Series B, #7, p. 62*).

Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with the Father from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father (*R&H, April 5, 1906*).

Further, there is a duty that devolves upon us. It is stated: "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" (*HM, July 1, 1897, par. 1*).

This is a call to move forward, a challenge to advance as Uriah Smith did. I do not know of a single ray of divine truth given to God's people which the leadership of the Smyrna Gospel Ministries has developed "on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done." If they have, I would like to know it. Instead of advancement I have seen only deception compounded, and a call to regression from truth.

In addition to the booklet prepared by Beachy, there was also included in the packet sent to those who responded to their advertisement in the card deck, a second booklet written by David Clayton of Jamaica originally published in *Old Paths*, January 2002. Claiming to be "the loud cry of the third angel" Clayton sets forth his antitrinitarian message as the unique doctrine to be taught now as a revival of the 1888 Message. On the point of the 1888 Message, we will say more later; however, he sought to prove that no voice in the community of Adventism is teaching the doctrine of God as he is teaching it. This is true; however, he sought

to place all others as teaching the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, and he alone proclaiming the true doctrine as the "loud cry."

One of the individuals Clayton cites is this editor, and the publication, *Watchman, What of the Night?* He quotes from the January 1998 issue. He makes it appear to be two consecutive paragraphs; however, the first paragraph is taken from page 2, and the second paragraph is taken from page 6. The second paragraph is merely a summary quotation from the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. V*, which I cited in connection with a Greek word. The first quotation is two of a three summary conclusion, which could be drawn from a series of verses cited. Clayton did not quote it as written or give its true context. Honest scholarship?

This article as written and now published in booklet form was designated by Allen Stump, the editor of *Old Paths*, as "a powerful message" and was given his full approval and blessing. But Stump knows what I believe and what I have taught. He spent a year on this campus, left for a year, and returned a year later, and asked to be placed again in the work of the Foundation. At that time I told him that if he would be honest and tell me the real reason why he left the first time, I would consider his request. He had given as his reason that his wife was not going to die and be buried outside of West Virginia. His wife being present, told him to go ahead and tell me, but he wouldn't. Perhaps now in self defence, he will.

In the January issue of *WWN*, this year, I have clearly stated my belief in regard to the Godhead. Perhaps I should state it negatively. I do not believe in the pagan pantheisms headed by Triads of deities. I do not believe in the papal Trinity as stated in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, par. #242*; nor in the WCC's trinity concept as stated in their Constitution and reproduced in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted at the 1980 Session of the General Conference at Dallas, Texas.

Now in regard to the assumption that Clayton has made regarding 1888 as to what the true message really was which was given by both

Jones and Waggoner at that session, may I suggest that the reader seek a copy of the letter which A. T. Jones wrote to Claude Holmes, May 12, 1921. It was printed in full in the *1888 Glad Tidings*, October 2003. It sets forth in distinct contrast the message as given by Jones and Waggoner and the deception which the Smyrna "Trinity" are seeking to perpetrate on the Adventist Community.

## Beachy's Greek

In his booklet, *What Did the Pioneers Believe?*, Beachy has an additional Bible Study on "The Truth About God" in which he references certain biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments to the numbering as found in Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, which supposedly gives the Hebrew, Chaldee, or Greek meaning of the word. It appears that he has also Thayer's Lexicon for the Greek as well as a Brown, Driver, and Briggs lexicon for the Hebrew.

As I noted his references and comments, I observed one that looked interesting, and so I thought I would check it out to see how Beachy made use of his linguistic tools. From Christ's remarks at the Last Supper, he concluded that Jesus was telling them that in His pre-existent state the Father was older than He. That brought the Scripture into harmony with his theology but did not bring his theology into harmony with the Scriptures.

The words of Jesus are translated in the KJV as "my Father is greater (μεζων) than I" (John 14:28); but Beachy concluded quoting Strong, that the word means, "larger (literally or figuratively, specifically in age)," and references the word's once such use in the NT - "It was said unto her the elder (ὁ μεζων) shall serve the younger" (Rom. 9:12). There he stopped, happy with his linguistic finding. Actually, this verse is quoted from the Greek Old Testament (LXX) just as Paul found it written there. The word is preceded by the definite article and has a pronominal force, while in John 14:28 Jesus is indicated as using it as a simple comparative,

"greater" (*Analytical Greek New Testament*, by Friberg & Friberg).

If Beachy had used his Thayer's, he would have found that μεζων is a form of μεγας - "great." Arndt & Gingrich concur, adding the word "large" to "great." Going to Strong, Beachy's source, I found that he did not quote it completely, using only what fitted his theology. Strong (#3187) reads in full from the point where he begins to quote - "larger (lit. or fig., spec. in age): - elder, greater (est), more." Beachy stopped at "age:" changed the punctuation and emphasized "specifically in age." "Greater" is the word used in John 14:28, and "elder" with an article in Rom. 9:12 quoting the LXX. Again, deception!

## Think It Over

Facing the challenge of the Jews - "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?," Jesus replied - "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:57-58). Jesus as the I AM had appeared to Moses at the burning bush. Before giving His verbal Name, which defines Him as self-existent and ever-existent, He declared Himself to be "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). He who answered the challenge of the Jews was not only before Abraham, but He was the God of Abraham.

Paul tells us that "when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself" (Heb. 6:13). That God was the Word made flesh, the I AM.

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*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isaiah 57:15).*

Compare with: Mark 1:24 - Luke 4:34 - John 14:16-18

## “Perception Meets Reality”

This was the caption on the lead article in the North American Division Edition of the *Adventist Review* for July 2003. It was adapted from a morning devotional by Charles C. Sandefur, president of ADRA, at the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee.

After reminiscing of his experience as a boy growing up in a home whose father was a conference executive, he declared:

Something happened to the Adventist face starting 25 or 30 years ago. We had been growing in an orderly fashion; then we just exploded with growth (p. 18).

The why-fore can and will become a subject of differing viewpoints depending on how one wants to recognize it, so as to explain it. This quarter of a century of time carries us back to Adventist history which preceded and influenced the growth to which Sandefur alludes. The events of 1955-56, and the resulting book, *Questions on Doctrine*, changed the doctrinal face of Adventism. The liberalism promoted by *Spectrum* altered the “lifestyle” and thinking of a large part of the scholastic section of Adventism. As Sandefur stated –

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an overwhelming new church. Less than 1 percent of Seventh-day Adventists have been members of the Adventist Church as long as I have (I am now a patriarch). Very few Adventists around the world have been members more than 50 years. Fewer than half have been Adventists more than 12 years. Two thirds of all Seventh-day Adventists who have ever been baptized are alive right now. We baptize more people in some individual months than existed in the church the year Ellen White died. We are a new church – overwhelmingly new – and the epicentre of Seventh-day Adventism has moved from North America to the Southern Hemisphere (pp. 18-19).

He declared himself a “patriarch” and a part of 1% of the membership of the Church. His father became a departmental secretary in the Texico Conference a couple of years after I entered the ministry in that conference. His mother was a student at Union College at the same time I was. Thus less than 1% are active members from the generation that preceded him, and can recall with any degree of vividness the 1955-56

conferences that changed the face of Adventism. Yet there has been republished the book *Questions on Doctrine* which resulted from those conferences with annotations by Dr. George Knight.

At the time of this writing (late November 2003), we have not yet received the copy ordered. When received, we will read the annotations carefully. There is one factor that needs to be pursued with diligence. The book that was published in 1957 was not the original answers given to Dr. Walter Martin, but a revised version so as to be more palatable to the Adventist laity. These original answers need to be released so that a full evaluation of the extent of the compromise may be known.

Other observations of Sandefur, as he summarized his visit to 43 countries during the year 2002, need to be underscored and their significance noted. Commenting on what the explosive growth means in reality, he stated:

We are growing so fast that some of those anchor points, institutions, and behaviors that I grew up with, that were a part of the deeply woven roots that made me a Seventh-day Adventist, don't exist around the world. You can't keep your supply lines filled as fast as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing. But we are moving with the Spirit, and we ought never to slow down to let the rest of us catch up with Him (p. 20).

There are some questions that can be asked and should be asked regarding this evaluation which make us cringe to even think about. We would have great difficulty in admitting even the necessity to ask such a question. Some years back a missionary educator serving in Africa visited, while on furlough, some relatives living on campus. In conversing with him, I asked him about how certain teachings involving the sanctuary were being taught. He replied that they weren't, as the native African would not understand them. Thus a major teaching that is basic to Adventism is omitted. Yet 34% of all Adventists today live in Africa. What is that saying?

Then Sandefur comments on Sabbath observance and worship. He declared:

I've spent some 20 Sabbaths around the world, in all kinds of churches. I've found out that almost every Adventist church has Sabbath School. They study the Sabbath school lesson. We pray on Sabbath, we sing on Sabbath, we worship on Sabbath, we witness on Sabbath, we have fellowship dinner on Sabbath, we play soccer on Sabbath, we play the piano on Sabbath. We worship until 12:00 (not 12:01) on Sabbath. And we worship until it gets dark on Sabbath. We celebrate the Sabbath in a variety of ways.

Despite a hundred different ways of keeping the Sabbath (some controversial, some that make me uncomfortable), the candle of the Sabbath cannot be blown out. Adventists still celebrate it, and they participate in holy time. The Lord of the Sabbath is greater than some of our behaviours on the Sabbath (pp. 20-21).

More questions enter one's mind. What are the answers? Does the unity for which Christ prayed involve only personal relationships, or did it also include faith and doctrine? In the prayer before crossing "the brook Cedron," Jesus not only prayed that we be one as He and the Father are one (17:22), but also that they which believed on Him "through [the apostle's] word" be one together with them, "sanctified through the truth" (17:19-21). Jesus declared the word of God, the truth (v. 17). The simple fact is that the Word of God says the same thing whether it is spoken in Africa, South America, Asia or North America; and for what purpose - "that they all may be one" (v. 21). Sandefur's report does not so indicate. Playing soccer and divine worship are not compatible activities for the Sabbath. Something is wrong.

To reopen the SDA-Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956 and the compromises of the faith which resulted, will further divide, not unify. But those who can speak from first-hand experience of what happened back in that decade and the one following are much smaller in number now than then, as Sandefur's statistics indicate.

The question also surfaces - "What do the vast majority of 'contemporary' Adventists really care about what happened back there anyway - those plus thirty years ago?" They are happy in their social fellowship, and they do recognize the Sabbath one way or another. Then on the other hand, the vast majority of the dwindling minority want what they call an "historic" Adventism which reflects "the pioneers" instead of accepting "the duty" which devolves upon them of "developing that truth on a higher scale than

it has hitherto been done." The "duty" involves more spiritual work than they are willing to expend.

Further, there will be those who will say that the compromises made with the Evangelicals in 1955-56, and now being reviewed in the republication of *Questions on Doctrine*, answer to "the advancing light" required. Or does it need to be called by its right name - Apostasy from the Truth? Then what would the advancing light of truth concern, that is to be advanced to a higher scale than has hitherto been done? Adventism has problems - major problems - and has seemingly no solution in this hour of ominously fulfilling prophecy.

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## Counsel from the Past

"How shall we search the Scriptures? Shall we drive our stakes of doctrine one after another, and then try to make all Scripture meet our established opinions, or shall we take our ideas and views to the Scriptures, and measure our theories on every side by the Scriptures of truth? Many who read and even teach the Bible, do not comprehend the precious truth they are teaching or studying. Men entertain errors, when the truth is clearly marked out, and if they would but bring their doctrines to the word of God, and not read the word of God in the light of their doctrines, to prove their ideas right, they would not walk in darkness and blindness, or cherish error. Many give the words of Scripture a meaning that suits their own opinions, and they mislead themselves and deceive others by their misinterpretations of God's word. As we take up the study of God's word, we should do so with humble hearts. All selfishness, all love of originality, should be laid aside. Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. It was the unwillingness of the Jews to give up their long-established traditions that proved their ruin. They were determined not to see any flaw in their opinions or in their expositions of the Scriptures; but however long men may have entertained certain views, if they are not clearly sustained by the written word, they should be discarded.

"Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for

investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their positions and ideas are crossed. This was the spirit cherished among us forty years ago. We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine; for we knew that Christ is not divided. One point at a time was made the subject of investigation. Solemnity characterized these councils of investigation. The Scriptures were opened with a sense of awe. Often we fasted, that we might be better fitted to understand the truth. After earnest prayer, if any point was not understood, it was discussed, and each one expressed his opinion freely; then we would again bow in prayer, and earnest supplications went up to heaven that God would help us to see eye to eye, that we might be one, as Christ and the Father are one. Many tears were shed. If one brother rebuked another for his dullness of comprehension in not understanding a passage as he understood it, the one rebuked would after take his brother by the hand, and say, "Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus is with us; let us keep a humble and teachable spirit;" and the brother addressed would say, "Forgive me, brother, I have done you an injustice." Then we would bow down in another season of prayer. We spent many hours this way. We did not generally study together more than four hours at a time, yet sometimes the entire night was spent in solemn investigation of the Scriptures, that we might understand the truth for our time. On some occasions the Spirit of God would come upon me, and difficult portions were made clear through God's appointed way, and then there was perfect harmony. We were all of one mind and one Spirit.

"We sought most earnestly that the Scriptures should not be wrested to suit any man's opinions. We tried to make our differences as slight as possible by not dwelling on points that were of minor importance, upon which there were varying opinions. But the burden of every soul was to bring about a condition among the brethren which would answer the prayer of Christ that His disciples might be one as He and the Father are one. Sometimes one or two of the brethren would stubbornly set themselves against the view presented, and would act out the natural feelings of the heart; but when this disposition appeared, we suspended our investigations and adjourned our meeting, that each one might have an opportunity to go to God in prayer, and without conversation with others, study the point of difference, asking light from heaven. With expressions of friendliness we parted, to meet

again as soon as possible for further investigation. At times the power of God came upon us in a marked manner, and when clear light revealed the points of truth, we would weep and rejoice together. We loved Jesus and we loved one another.

"In those days God wrought for us, and the truth was precious to our souls. It is necessary that our unity today be of a character that will bear the test of trial. ...

"We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they never will have to give up a cherished view, never have an occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed" (R&H, July 26, 1892).

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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.

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